
BENEDICTA.

A NOVEL.

VOL. II.

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BENEDICTA.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

" A Woman, whose ruling Passion is not Vanity, is superior
to any ^{Man} of equal Faculties."

— " Let the Unhappiness you feel at another's
Errors, and the Happiness you enjoy in their Perfections, be the
Measure of your Progress in Wisdom and Virtue."

LAVATER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

Printed for WILLIAM LANE, at the

Æsirva,

LEADENHALL STREET.

M.DCC.XLI.



21 NOV 1968

BENEDICTA.

CHAP. XVIII.

MRS. Butler who sat by the bed-side asked impatiently what she had said; Jenny made no reply, but as she hung weeping over her dear mistress's pillow clasped her hands in silent woe. It is probable that the poor girl then, for the first time conceived some idea of the real state of the case. She was immediately dispatched to the parlour with the news of Miss Clarkson's recovery, on which Lord Davenport entreated permission to see her, which being granted, and the poor young

lady having by this time recovered the faculty of recollection, she no sooner saw him at her bed-side, than in accents of mingled chagrin and distress she exclaimed, " Will you pardon me my Lord this involuntary impropriety."

" Pardon, (returned he, pressing her hand to his lips) Oh ! my Benedicta, what have I not suffered in the dreadful apprehension of losing you for ever ; but you revive, and I again am happy."

Mrs. Butler thought a further conversation absolutely improper at that time, and requesting his Lordship to leave Miss Clarkson to enjoy the repose the nature of the case demanded — they both retired.

" You may leave me also, Jenny, (cried Benedicta) I had much rather be alone at present."

" Pray,

"Pray, dear Madam, (returned the girl) do not command me to leave you : if you knew how my heart aches for you."—

"I am better now—go, go—I am quite well."

"Ah! I wish (resumed Jenny weeping bitterly) that all were as well as it should be, happiness I see does not always go with riches."

"Pshaw, (peevishly) what stuff is this, go I say, I will ring when I want you."

The affectionate young woman reluctantly obeyed; as she went out she met Miss Curtis, who had just been home, to inform her anxious father of Miss Clarkson's being better; they both retired to the dressing room, where Jenny, eager

to be satisfied as to the suspicions she began to entertain, doubted not of acquiring an exact knowledge of the affair from this young lady, who she knew to be very high in her mistress's confidence; but here she was disappointed, Miss Curtis was as much astonished as herself, though, indeed, had she been privy to the secret, it is probable she would not have intrusted it with the waiting woman.

Benedicta, finding herself alone, burst into a violent flood of tears, which yielding some relief to her oppressed heart, she at length began seriously to reflect on the circumstances of her present situation—the incident of the preceeding night, had discovered to her a secret which till then she had been unconscious of—namely, that her coldness to Lord Davenport had originated in an ardent tenderness to young

Mountford;

Mountford;—to marry his Lordship at the time her affections were devoted to another, by whom also that affection was warmly returned, appeared to her a manifest violation of sincerity, as well as of her own liberty of choice—on the other hand, had she not proceeded too far with Lord Davenport to retract with honour—would it not be injuring him in the basest manner: but then again should she discover the state of her heart to that Nobleman, generosity,—nay, self-love, would impel him readily to absolve her of her engagements; he would even rejoice in the discovery—to this suggestion it was not long before she replied to herself—that it was indeed probable his Lordship would release her of all ties to himself, but was it not likely her conduct would have a most unhappy effect on his peace of mind, she might indeed effect her own happiness but would it not be at

the cruel expence of one who tenderly loved her and whose merit certainly deserved a more generous return, it was clear then that the principles of honour, generosity, and rectitude all concurred to demand the fulfilling of her engagement, it was true by this marriage she should sacrifice the tender sensibilities of the heart, and by giving up the sole object of her love, reject the only prospect of consummate happiness that the earth afforded her. But in what (cried she) consists the real happiness of a rational soul, is it not in a strict obedience to the eternal law of rectitude, it is done then—Frederic I have not injured you, you know not that you possess my heart, it is I only who shall be the sacrifice; from this moment, dear and sole beloved youth, I give thee up for ever, honour, virtue, triumphs; I am your's Lord

Davenport;

Davenport; my hand and my unspotted faith shall both be pledged to you.

Scarcely had Miss Clarkson formed that resolution, when Sally Curtis tenderly sympathetic, would no longer be restrained from enquiring her health—she entered the room, and was agreeably surprised to find the countenance of her beloved friend wearing once more the aspect of tranquillity.—Benedicta assuring her that she felt herself much recovered, that young lady informed her, that her father wished to make her a visit, in answer to which she immediately desired her to acquaint the good Doctor of her readiness to see him—their conversation was not likely to be interrupted, as Lord Davenport was gone with Mr. Butler to refresh his lately agitated spirits by a ride, and Mrs. Butler extremely anxious to prevent any improper

construction of the affair of the morning, was making visits to some of her gossiping neighbours.

The worthy divine was conducted into the dressing room, where after expressing an unfeigned concern for her late indisposition, he drew a letter from his pocket saying "I am charged Madam with a small commission from a friend of yours—this letter was intrusted to my care."— Benedicta glancing her eye on the superscription, instantly changed colour and replied—"you will excuse me, Sir,—I can receive no letter from that quarter."—"I am glad to hear that resolution (resumed the Doctor) but the contents of this letter, my dear young lady, are such, as you may and ought to be acquainted with."—"What cried she, (blushing)—you know them then!"—“I do, Madam, or I would not have undertaken

undertaken to become the bearer," he then presented her the letter, the contents of which were as follows:

To Miss CLARKSON,

NOTHING Madam is more feeble than virtue when unfortunately the passions are inimical to its resolves; that I have presumed to love you is true, but that you have been made acquainted with it impute to the delirium of a moment; the incident of being found with your picture—the thoughts of being about to quit you forever, overpowered every consideration which reason had forcibly suggested, and seized at once the fortress which honour, as I believed, had erected in my soul. But to err is the infirmity of nature; to recover it the glory of reason. Henceforth it will be the effort of my life, not indeed to forget the divine object I have dared to love, but at least to obliterate every

remembrance of her that must now become criminal, nor shall my recent frailty induce me to despair of this conquest, the mind, Madam, possesses strength unknown to herself till virtue calls for its exertion, then it is that we soar above ourselves, and aspire to that perfection which is the honour of our nature, consider then your Mountford no longer as an audacious wretch, insensible to every principle but that of an unworthy selfishness, but rather as one who will ever bear you the most friendly regard, and can and does rejoice in your felicity, though it must be abstracted from his own. In this light considered, I will not despair of pardon for past temerity, relying on your goodness, I will even believe that pardon granted, and that you permit me to subscribe myself

Your most faithful of friends,

MOUNTFORD.

Sensibly affected by the contents of this epistle, Miss Clarkson wiped away the tears she had shed in reading it, and collecting her fortitude, asked the Doctor if he really thought these sentiments might be depended on.

" Undoubtedly, Madam, I dare answer Mr. Mountford will steadily adhere to his resolves henceforward."

" Then I am happy, for indeed I think I could not be perfectly so, were I persuaded this poor young man would be otherwise. But since, my good Sir, you seem thoroughly acquainted with the state of his heart, may I ask how you came to possess that confidence in so delicate an affair."

" To say truth, Madam, I was acquainted with it even before it was known to

himself, as my regard for Mr. Mountford led me to tremble at the consequences of so imprudent an attachment ; it also impelled me not only to acquaint him with my suspicions, but to assist him to subdue it by every argument requisite on the occasion.”

“ Ah ! then, it is you I must blame for that unfortunate reserve which has led to this most unhappy crisis ; but, surely Sir, it could not have been right to inculcate an artificial conduct ?”

“ The conduct I recommended, Madam, was not an artificial but an honest one, I taught him not to dissemble a conquest over himself, but really to obtain it.”

“ And wherefore, my worthy Doctor, was this rigid self-denial so necessary ?”

“ To

“ To avoid the extreme of baseness, Madam, for such I must esteem that passion which would rob a lady of those advantages of life to which she has an apparent right.”

“ Ah ! Sir, the world strangely perverts the true sense of words, when it affixes the idea of happiness to wealth or rank, which in fact has nothing to do with them.”

“ So it may appear to the speculative philosopher, but the real actor on the stage of life will be of a different opinion perhaps.”

“ To wave however this discussion (resumed the lady) I will convince you of the high esteem I entertain of your judgment and discretion Sir, by frankly confessing that had I been apprised of Mr. Mountford’s attachment some short time before

before, it would have saved me from an embarrassment of the most painful and tender kind," here she fetched a profound sigh, " however (continued she, after a little pause) I have at length sacrificed happiness to honour."

That is impossible, my dear young lady, since they can neither exist separately nor can they be divided.—Beware of falling into the error which has reduced thousands to discontent and misery, that of expecting rapture where we ought only to look for solid comforts, the latter we may always enjoy in the exercise of virtue, the former neither is nor can be consistent with our present state; the struggle you have sustained I can easily believe to have cost you somewhat dear, but it will enhance the happiness of your future life, by rendering you deserving it, and I most sincerely honour

honour and congratulate you on this noble triumph of reason; permit me also to observe, that by this conduct you will shine in your proper sphere, if (as you certainly must) you allow that to be so wherein we have the best opportunities of being useful to society — were you to consult only certain emotions, you must necessarily be reduced to circumstances in which your views of happiness would unavoidably be of a selfish and private nature; as the wife of Lord Davenport, madam, you will possess an ample latitude of promoting the good of others, both by exhibiting your virtues in an eminent light, and also in the exertion of that beneficence which is your amiable characteristic, and indeed I am convinced you could not have chosen the paths of obscure life, without being guilty of wronging that society of which you are, and ought to consider yourself a

member;

member; as social beings there are obligations incumbent on us, which we are very far from discharging if we suffer our views to center in that sordid point of living ~~only for ourselves.~~

“Your sentiments are liberal, Sir, and I believe just.—With respect to myself, my future plan of life shall be regulated thereby, but I should be glad to know how we may best restore the peace of poor Mountford.”

“Leave it to time, madam, he is very far from imagining that the avowal of his passion has incited in yourself any other sentiment than that of displeasure; an attachment therefore that can have no hopes to subsist on, must necessarily expire at least the mind recoiling as it were on herself, will soon exert her own powers of resistance.

resistance. New objects, new pursuits, will take him off from the indulgence of these pernicious ideas, but that whereon I build my fairest expectations, is a certainty of Mr. Mountford's possessing the soundest principles of religion and morality; these will soon convince him that every fond remembrance of yourself must be of a criminal nature; these will give strength where nature fails; in short, madam, from one of his dispositions you may hope every thing which your generosity prompts you to do."

" You have restored me to tranquility my good Doctor, your counsels shed new light on my mind, and teach me to esteem myself in a very different view from what I did before; I am not without strong hopes they will also enable me the next time I appear before you on the most

solemn

solemn occasion, to acquit myself with that fortitude which will be the best comment on your lessons."

Here the sound of a carriage driving into the court-yard, announced the arrival of Mrs. Butler, and, as the doctor had not the most cordial regard for that lady, he took leave of Miss Clarkson, though in a manner which fully express'd the tenderest regard for her welfare, and the satisfaction he sincerely felt in the serenity she apparently enjoyed; resolved to leave no opportunity for any returning fluctuation of thought: as soon as Lord Davenport sent to enquire her health, Benedicta returned answer, that she found herself so well recovered as to be able to see his Lordship whenever he thought proper; that anxious lover readily embraced the permission, and was received with all the complacency he could desire.

In

In fine, the marriage was duly solemnized on the next morning; the bride conducted herself during the sacred ceremony with composure and graceful condescension. Lord Davenport in receiving her hand from her guardian, was observed to lift his eyes in pious elevation, intimating a most grateful sense of the inestimable felicity then conferred on him. He presented doctor Curtis with a valuable diamond ring as a token of esteem, and at the same time presented fifty pounds as a donation to the poor.

"Now (cried Mr. Butler as soon as they were at home) I am most happy, this auspicious day repays the anxious care I have felt for my dear ward's felicity."

"That care, replied his Lordship, I esteem transferred to me, and I trust will

be

be so tenderly discharged, as to leave this dear lady no room to regret her change of guardians.'

Benedicta thanked him, by a look which evidently expressed her confidence in his generosity.

'I can tell you my lord (resumed Mr. Butler) that if she does, I shall be very ready to take the office back again—tell his Lordship this Benedicta if ever he offends you.'

Every body smiled at the facetiousness of this speech; as indeed they all heartily participated in the happiness of the day. The charming bride now threw her arms tenderly around Miss Curtis, who promised with tears, soon to visit her at the castle; she then took an affectionate leave

of

of her guardian, a respectful one of his lady, who expressed great concern at being about to be deprived of her company. On this occasion, we believe her to have been sincere; not indeed at the prospect of losing so amiable a companion, as much as for the disappointment of an opportunity of using the epithet of your Ladyship at every other syllable, in which she discovered so much delight, that she had already applied it near fourscore times during the space of an hour and a quarter, which elapsed from their return from church, to the departure of the bridal pair. Indeed, the reverend divine had scarcely pronounced the final benediction, when Mrs. Butler declared that she sincerely wished her ladyship all the felicity her ladyship merited, which she doubted not of her ladyship's possessing by an union with so amiable person as his lordship.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIX.

INSENSIBLE to every idea of personal fatigue on so interesting an occasion, Lady Davenport's first instance of conjugal complacency was discoverable in the expedition with which she determined to pursue her journey, although from a tender regard to her ease, his Lordship would readily have repressed the ardour of his own impatience in a much shorter time than could have been expected. The new married pair arrived at the noble seat of the S——'s family, where they found the good Earl struggling with a malady which the faculty had pronounced fatal. While the

notice

notice of their arrival was conveyed to him, Lord Davenport conducted his lady into the drawing-room, and folding her in a tender embrace, while the tear of ineffable emotion glistened in his eye, said, "Now my Benedicta, my wife, my soul's better half, do I bid you welcome to the seat of my ancestors, and oh! may it prove to you the sweet abode of every felicity."

"Doubt it not, my lord, (returned she smiling) it is sanctified by the virtue of its amiable possessors, and the heart which finds not happiness in such a mansion, must itself be unworthy of such enjoyment."

Here they were informed that the Earl desired to see them, "and will my love (said he) condescend to gratify the wish of this dear dying parent."

"Most

"Most readily, my lord; is it not my own most honoured father—cheerfully I go to testify the duty of a faithful daughter."

Transported with such engaging proofs of a disposition the most amiable, the delighted husband tenderly pressed her hand to his lips; then led her to his father's chamber, where an affecting scene ensued; the Earl supported on his pillow, extended his arms to embrace the son of his love.

"It is enough, (cried he) I behold my son before I die; but where is"—His voice faltered, he could utter no more. Benedicta understanding the purport of that enquiry, threw herself on her knees at the bedside. "See" said she "my dear and honoured father, one who desires a share in your paternal blessing." The Earl fixed his eyes stedfastly upon her, and feeble as

he

he was, seemed surprized at the sight of so lovely a creature. " May every blessing (he resumed) both of time and eternity rest on your head, my daughter, and on that of my son, who I trust will live long to thank you for the honour you have done our family. I could wish, if it were possible to be spared a little space, that I might witness your felicity—but I submit"—

The faces of both were bathed in tears; they could only breathe in silence a pious ejaculation for the prolongation of a life justly valuable to society. From that hour Lady Davenport exerted herself in every office of a most affectionate daughter, she was constantly in his room, administered every medicine with her own hand, and by her tender assiduities soothed the languor of his disease, while her delighted Lord beheld her employed in the pious

task with heightened admiration, love, and gratitude.

About this time the family received a very unexpected visitor in the person of Doctor Hartwell, an intimate friend of the Earl; this gentleman had formerly practised physic with the greatest success, but finding himself declining into the vale of years, he relinquished practice in order to enjoy the pleasures of a cultivated mind in elegant retirement; hearing of the Earl's indisposition he had purposely made this visit, and having maturely deliberated on the case, declared that although the symptoms of his disease were of an alarming nature, he did not conclude the cure intirely hopeless, particularly could his Lordship be removed to a more southern climate the Earl readily came into the measure, for as his seat was not far from the coast, he thought it

it possible to be conveyed by sea to the south of France, Doctor Hartwell proposed to be his immediate attendant in the voyage; "and I, (said Benedicta) will be his Lordship's nurse."

"No, my child, (returned the Earl) I will by no means allow you to suffer the inconveniences of a sea passage, particularly with a valetudinarian, neither will I take Lord Davenport from you, you shall both wait here the news of my recovery, which I have a strong persuasion by this good gentleman's care and skill, you will shortly receive."

Benedicta observed, that as she had determined to see no company while his Lordship's health should be in so precarious a state, it would be more agreeable to her to accompany him than to remain in a

state of anxiety at the castle, she therefore hoped neither himself or her lord would mortify her so far as to reject her proposal; in fine, the voyage was agreed on pursuant to her own plan, and, as soon as she was alone with her husband, she received the homage of his transported and grateful heart, for a conduct so infinitely endearing, which in his idea expressed a sweetness and benignity of soul, not to be paralleled in the whole race of woman-kind.

From the foregoing passages of this history, it is probable the reader feels some pain respecting the real state of Lady Davenport's mind, we will therefore without hesitation assert her to have been at this time, not only apparently, but in fact, one of the happiest of women; according to an established hypothesis in morality,

B E N E D I C T A.

29

morality, the practice of virtue is attended with the only true and exquisite satisfactions; her Ladyship had sacrificed even the tenderest sensibilities of her heart, to a scrupulous regard to the rigid laws of honour, she had renounced, not a worthless profligate with whom the prospect of happiness must at least have been dubious, the object of her affections was possessed of every qualification that could promote the highest degree of social felicity, nor could she be intimidated by obeying the dictates of her passion by the fear of future indigence, since her fortune was sufficient to have procured them a decent competency, with every feeling which could bias a young and susceptible heart, she chose a diminution of her own happiness, rather than violate an engagement, which however serious, was certainly binding only in the eye of honour; we therefore do not see it

possible for that person to have been unhappy, who could possess a fund of ineffable reflections, naturally resulting from such a conduct, but least this argument should be thought too much of a speculative nature, we would confirm our assertion by observing, that Lord Davenport was not only the handsomest and most accomplished nobleman in the kingdom, but was also possessed of a fine understanding, embellished by every assistance which literature or a knowledge of the world could impart; that suavity of temper with which the liberal hand of nature had endowed him, had received its proper value and improvement by a cultivation of the moral taste, and a strict regard to the establishment of every noble principle; so that in short, his mind was an exact picture of every thing generous, great, and benign:—qualities such as these must infallibly

fallibly have produced esteem even in minds less susceptible than that of her Ladyship; if to these we add the constant attention to please, the fond anticipation of every wish, which she could not but remark in the conduct of her husband towards her; we must allow, that if the peculiar feeling, stiled by some, "the tender sympathy of love," was not actually felt, there was at least something which in the eye of dispassionate reason must appear a full equivalent; and as it certainly did in the estimation of Lady Davenport, who, whatever remembrance she might still retain of Mountford, it is certain that reflection never induced her to consider her present happiness in a comparative light; her good sense ever securing her from that species of folly, by which half the world are ingenious in tormenting themselves, when they stupidly overlook

the value of present enjoyments; instead of idly speculating on the possibility of their having been rendered greater.

Preparations for the intended voyage having been made with all expedition, the noble family embarked for the Continent, viz. the Earl, his son and Lady, together with the good doctor Hartwell; nor did her Ladyship suffer so much from the sickness, incident to persons unused to the sea as had been apprehended; on the contrary, her health and spirits were never better, and as they were blessed with the most favourable weather, she expressed the utmost pleasure in the voyage.
“ You must allow, my Lord, (said she facetiously) that I make an excellent sailor, and since I have now caught a taste for emigration, you must not be surprised if I tease you some day for leave to double the Cape.”

“ Go

" Go where you please, my fair tar,
(returned he) as long as you consent to
take me with you—in the most distant
part of the globe I should still suppose
myself at home, while permitted to re-
pose in those dear arms."

But, as perhaps, the reader may not be so much enamoured of a jaunt by sea as her Ladyship, we will stay no longer on the water than just to observe, that the saline breezes, together with the motion of the vessel, had the happiest effect on the noble valetudinarian; his appetite and strength were found to recover by slow, though perceptible degrees, and at length he landed on the French coast in much better health than could rationally have been expected. In a short time the air and waters of Montpellier were found so salutary, that all around him felt the most

sensible satisfaction in the pleasing probability of his intire recovery. This agreeable circumstance permitted the young couple to taste the various pleasures and amusements, which that much frequented town afforded; they were visited by several families of the highest distinction, whom those salubrious springs had invited both from various parts of France and Italy. Lord and Lady Davenport were not characters to be regarded with indifference, the homage which perhaps had primarily been paid to their rank, was soon converted into personal esteem, and they had the felicity of forming such connections as rendered this absence from their native country, not only tolerable but pleasing; when at length the good Earl was so well recovered of his malady, as to be able to travel. These noble personages resolved on making a tour to

several

several parts of the Continent, which employed a period of nearly three years. As it will not be necessary to follow them through all the stages of their perigrination, we will take this opportunity of advertizing to a certain character, which bears no inconsiderable part in this history.

C H A P. XX.

A few hours after Mr. Mountford's unexpected rencontro with his beloved Benedicta, he set out for Oxford, and pursuant to the direction of his uncle entered himself a commoner in —— College. For some time after his arrival,

his thoughts were so wholly engrossed by those fond ideas, which for some time past had almost made a part of his existence, that he was totally regardless of every thing around him. Mr. Butler had taken care to provide him a tutor of profound learning and abilities; but so little attention did the young gentleman pay to his discourses, that he soon pronounced him an absolute blockhead, who would have cut a better figure at the plough, than at the seat of the Muses, and had actually designed an avowal of this opinion to Mr. Butler; when at length a letter from Doctor Curtis, so severely reprehended a certain lassitude of mind, discoverable in the letters which that excellent man had received from his young friend, that Frederic began to blush at the weakness he had indulged, and so powerfully opposed both reason and argument to the excess

excess of a fruitless passion, that he began by degrees to recover the serenity and vigour of his mind; not that he could wholly divest himself of every fond remembrance of that Lady, but he had so happily succeeded in the conquest of himself, as to be able to think of her more with the softness of friendship than the ardour of a lover: this was exactly what the good Doctor Curtis had prognosticated, and abundantly justified the estimate he had drawn of the principles of young Mountford, who now applied himself so diligently to improve the advantages of his situation, that his natural abilities soon appeared with a brilliancy, which both delighted and astonished his tutor; and he now so far relinquished the opinion he had formerly conceived of him, that he thought him one of the brightest geniuses at the University.

We

We are now to behold that amiable young man treading the rich fields of science, and exploring with restless curiosity the treasures of ancient and modern learning, the gracefulness and benignity of his manners, which originated not so much from the studied rules of politeness, as the native urbanity of his soul, extremely endeared him to every body, while the extent of his knowledge, and the sprightly sallies of a temper, naturally lively, rendered him so pleasing a companion, that his company was anxiously desired by all those whose high stations in life, induced them to consider learning by no means one of the necessary appendages of a man of fashion, and who consequently were more rigid admirers of Bacchus or Venus, than the Muses. The conviviality of Mountford's temper, at first led him too easily to acquiesce with

these

these invitations ; the consequence was, that he soon found his finances in a disagreeable condition, for such was the independance of his spirit, that he could not brook the enjoyment of pleasure at the expence of others ; nor would he prostitute his talents to servile dependance on the great. He had contracted some little necessary debts, trifling indeed in their amount, but yet greater than he found himself able to discharge when delivered to him ; he therefore took the liberty of writing to his uncle for an advance of the next quarter's stipend which he allowed him—a stipend indeed too small to enable him to appear as a gentleman in his present situation, yet as much as Mrs. Butler's taste for fashionable expence could leave his uncle at liberty to bestow.

Mr. Butler, not altogether pleased with
the

the nature of this request, which he looked on as a prognostic of future extravagance, sent him a gentle remonstrance against the adopting a line of conduct, which must be unsuitable to his condition in life. He accompanied this letter with a trifling sum, but positively declared his resolution of never more assisting him with a single shilling in advance, hurt at the style of his uncle's letter, but still more chagrined by the pecuniary freights he was obliged to sustain, he immediately perceived the impropriety of his late conduct, and resolved in future to adhere so strictly to such a plan of œconomy, as should render even his narrow income an independance. To effect this design, it was necessary for him to drop his convivial acquaintances; in doing which, he incurred the ridicule of most of them, and was honoured with the appellation of book-worm—strange fellow

—narrow

—narrow soul wretch; all which, however, he treated with becoming contempt, and from that time prosecuted his studies with so much assiduity, that though he escaped that honourable epithet, a jolly fellow, (a panegyric expressive of all the excellencies which those who usually confer it have an idea of) yet by the most worthy and discerning, he was esteemed a young gentleman of the best learning and the most accomplished manners.

Mr. Mountford had now spent two years at the University, securing the most solid advantages to himself, and acquiring the esteem of all whom he valued or respected, when he received the following letter from his uncle,

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

THE accounts I have continued to receive from your tutors, are such

as

as procure you honour, and me satisfaction; it is now time for you to think of being established in life, for my own part, I could wish you to take holy orders, though it is not in my power to promise you any advancement, yet I presume, you have not so ill employed your time at the University, as to have made no connections which might be serviceable to you in life: Butler-place, for reasons I need not here enumerate, you will not esteem an eligible residence, settle therefore on some plan as soon as possible, and communicate to me your intention—you may always rely on the regard of, &c.

WILLIAM BUTLER.

The receipt of this epistle, gave Mr. Mountford to understand, that he was no longer to expect the annual allowance he had received during the last two years; neither

neither, indeed, considering the character of Mrs. Butler, and her ascendancy over the finances of her husband, had he any reason to rely on that regard he had expressed in the conclusion of his letter, he was therefore necessitated to think seriously on the means of future subsistence. That profession which his uncle had particularly recommended to him, was not at all adapted to his choice; not that he entertained a contemptible opinion, but rather an awful veneration for the sacred function, and thought the sanctity of its professors ought to be of a nature, which comported not with the gaiety of youth, or that hilarity of temper which he himself possessed; how far this conclusion was a just one, or why the natural cheerfulness of an innocent heart might not be consistent with the solemnity of the sacred orders, we shall not here enquire.

Of

Of all the Oxonians who had honoured him with particular marks of attention, there was one who possessed a very high place in his esteem ; this was the son of a certain Viscount, who, though like most other young men of his rank, he discovered a stronger propensity to pleasure than learning ; yet he had not entirely neglected the cultivation of those abilities which were naturally good, and if he was not without his foibles, he had never indulged those gross irregularities of conduct, which, betray, in general, a weak head as well as a bad heart ; his temper was courteous and liberal ; as to his principles Frederic really believed them to be good, whether they were so in fact the sequel of this history perhaps will discover. Suffice to say, that nobody could occasionally discourse with more perspicuity on the moral obligations of virtue ;

nobody

nobody could better assume the aspect of candour, or talk more fluently in the language of honour. However, whether these qualities were specious or real it matters not at present, Montford believed them the latter, and that was sufficient to justify the intimacy he had contracted with this gentleman. Mr. H—— (for so he was called) happening to drop in at the very instant he was musing on his uncle's letter, soon found means of extorting a confession of that perplexity he then appeared labouring under, as well as a brief relation of the occasion.—“ And is this all,” cried the young commoner, “ then take courage my lad, you shall take orders; but it is time enough for *that* yet. My father has the gift of several valuable benefices, one of which I have set my eyes on for you, as the present incumbent is old; and I dare believe

his

his

his Lordship will not deny it you at my particular suit. Mean time, I have a plan in my head; you must know it is designed by my good father that I should make a proper enquiry, whether the trees on the Continent have their roots in earth or air, or in other words I am to travel, which generally speaking ends in no higher intelligence than that I have named; but to the purpose, you shall go with me Mountford as my travelling tutor."

"Surely you jest, my dear H—. I have never travelled myself."

"What then, you will be the more disposed to gape at every thing you see, which for ought I know is all the business our young fellows go a broad for—however, seriously, your speculative temper will certainly lead to those enquiries

which are the proper end of travel, of course I shall by your means be brought acquainted with those subjects I ought to consider."

" But I have neither age nor abilities necessary for such an office, and though great may be your partiality in this respect, it is not to be supposed his Lordship, your father, would be so far imposed on."

" Will you consent if he does, to this plan."

" I will attend you as a companion, but in no other light would I impose myself."

" Enough ! I will engage my father approves the scheme; this day fortnight I shall leave Oxford, be sure you get ready to set off along with me."

" At

" At the appointed time, therefore, Mr. H—— took his friend to his father's seat, who though a Nobleman of great discernment, was so well pleased with the abilities, and address of Mountford, that he joined with his son in requesting that he would accompany him on his intended tour, and declared that he thought no other tutor necessary, so firmly was he convinced that his son would reap every requisite advantage, through the medium of so intelligent a companion, and perhaps imbibe the desired knowledge with greater facility, than if dictated by the austerity of self-conceited ability. In fine, the two young gentleman sat out for the Continent, and soon after arrived at Paris.

Here Mr. Mountford made it his principal endeavours, to direct the attention of his companion to those subjects which appeared

appeared most worthy of it, and indeed for some time with great success : Mr. H —— naturally possessed a turn for observation, and investigated the character and genius of that people with surprising accuracy ; they visited the several academies of learning, and were introduced to men of Science and literature ; in a word, every thing went on perfectly well, till happening one night to be at the Opera, they took their seats near a beautiful young woman, apparently about the age of eighteen : she was accompanied by an elderly lady who seemed to be her mother. Our travellers were not wanting in those civilities which women naturally expect from the other sex. In France too, where a more unrestrained gallantry is allowable, the lady could neither be surprized or offended at the polite attention of the

strangers, particularly as their appearance denoted them of no contemptible rank.

The next day was that appointed by them for taking a view of the Louvre : when Mountford therefore in the morning began to prepare to set out, he was infinitely astonished at hearing Mr. H—— exclaim, “ Hang it, I have no inclination for staring at pictures and statues at present, though I would give the world for a sight of that divine creature, who sat next us at the Opera.”

“ Pshaw ! you may see an hundred such any night.”

“ Never, (replied he with warmth) she is the most lovely woman I ever beheld ; and if ever I marry, that is the person.”

Most

" Most ridiculous, H—, did you come to France to pick up a wife ? "

" I will never take one out of it."

" But you know nothing of the girl — nothing of her family — was ever an idea more romantically absurd."

" You have touched on the very point that I wanted to mention ; could not you, Frederic, have the good nature to make those enquiries for me."

" I make those enquiries : Do you suppose, Sir, that I attend you then as a pimp ? "

" How you talk, Mountford ; is it not evident, that by desiring your assistance in the affair, I am anxious to give proof of

the honour of my design : had I any unworthy end in view, can you imagine I should have made you privy to it !”

“ Perhaps, I was too hasty, my friend—I will oblige you, but it must be on two conditions.”

“ What are they ?

“ That your designs are strictly honourable; and secondly, that you will consult your father.”

“ This you may assuredly rely on.”

“ As to the lady’s family, I have reason to think it a respectable one, for I happened last night to over-hear some one address her by the appellation of Mademoiselle de L———. I know a family of that name,

name, and should this be the daughter, I shall not be ashamed of your choice: an acquaintance of mine visits them, and I will inform you farther in the evening."

It proved, that Mr. Mountford had been perfectly right in his conjecture; the lady was indeed the daughter of Monsieur de L——, a gentleman of a very ancient family, though somewhat reduced in point of fortune. Mademoiselle was not only very handsome, but a young Lady of singular accomplishments and merit. Perfectly satisfied with these discoveries, Mountford procured his friend to be introduced to the family, where he was received with much cordiality, and had frequent opportunities of acknowledging his passion to the fair object of it, who honoured him with such a return as was extremely flattering to his hopes. The affair

having thus far succeeded, it remained for him to obtain the approbation of Lord M——. To which purpose he indited an epistle, wherein he candidly represented every circumstance, and then gave it to Mountford for his approbation; but, in fact, the letter was committed privately to the flames: at a proper time, he pretended to have received an answer, in which the Viscount gave his warmest assent to his son's marriage. Mountford was not acquainted with his Lordship's hand-writing, and consequently was easily duped by the fraud. In consequence of the opinion which he entertained of the matter, he insisted on Mr. H—— making his proposals to the parents of the young Lady, who, with the utmost sorrow, told him, he had already done so; but that they would never consent to his marrying their daughter except he would change his religion and

become

Become a catholic, a point, added he, on which I would ask your advice.

“ As I do not suppose it possible (returned the other) for one of your enlightened understanding to swallow the absurdities of that church, your conversion to it must be purely a feigned one; now as I must think such dissimulation entirely mean, if not base, I can by no means advise you to it.”

“ Nor would I condescend to the deception.”

“ You must then give up your suit as far as I can see.”

“ I will do it, rather than renounce my religion, whatever it may cost me.”

"The resolution H — is worthy of yourself, I rejoice that you discover so much magnanimity."

"Ah! my dear friend, the trial is more severe than perhaps you imagine. Is it possible for one, who loves with the sincerity I do, to resign the object of ones soul."

"It is very possible," said Mountford, but a tender sigh escaped him as he spoke.

At length, believing that his friend had really fortitude enough to give up all thoughts of the lady, he proposed the pursuing their travels, not doubting, but it would be the means of relieving the anxiety of his mind. After taking leave of their acquaintance at Paris, they visited Toulon, Rochelle, and every place of

note

note in France, then pursued their way to the Netherlands. Mountford would have embarked at Ostend, but Mr. H— determined to return to Calais; at this place, he pretended to recollect the leaving some papers of consequence at Paris; to recover which, it was necessary for him to go thither, and taking post horses he quitted his friend, promising to be back with him in a few days; so indeed he was, but to the utter astonishment of Mountford he was accompanied by Mademoiselle de L_____.

“ What have you done,” (cried he) giving him a severe look.

“ Nothing that can displease you my rigid censor, (replied Mr. H—) this Lady is now my wife.”

Mountford shook his head in silence.

“ Nay, (resumed the other) if you doubt my veracity, apply to the lady herself, be so good as to satisfy this gentleman, my dear Mrs. H——.”

“ I have really the happiness of being this gentleman’s wife; (said the lady smiling) however, I respect your scruples, Sir, and shall ever esteem you on that account, but for your satisfaction, I will assure you we were married privately by the English Ambassador’s chaplain.”

However improbable Mountford might think the account, he could not on the whole, so greatly suspect either the Lady’s virtue or sincerity as to doubt of it; he therefore paid her the proper compliments, and then hinted the necessity of their

their immediately embarking for England, where (added he) you will find, Madam, an asylum from the resentment of your friends, in the paternal goodness of Lord M—.”

To be short, the packet being ready to sail, they embarked and soon arrived in London, where Mr. H— placed his Lady in very elegant lodgings, designing to pass some time there, as the Viscount, his father, was then attending the Irish Parliament. It is impossible to imagine a couple more happy in each other than were Mr. and Mrs. H—, while Mountford, who was blest with a disposition which enabled him to find his happiness in that of other people, had almost forgot the severity of his own lot in the felicity of his friends.

C H A P XXI.

AFTER they had passed a considerable time in town, partaking of every amusement it afforded, Mr. H—— one day reminded his friend, that as it was probable the gentleman, who then held the living he had promised him, would not survive a great while on account of his age, he judged it expedient for Mountford to prepare himself for an induction to it by returning to Oxford, and there pursuing the proper steps for being admitted to holy orders; "but, as

continued

continued Mr. H——, these things will require a certain portion of the needful, you must permit me Frederic to become your banker, till such time as you are in possession of your benefice; take this bank note of fifty pounds, and if not sufficient, you know on whom to draw for more."

The generosity and friendship of this procedure, had its proper effect on the feelings of Mountford, who felt, as well as expressed every thing which a grateful mind might be expected to do on such an occasion. He was indeed in some doubt as to the acceptance of the bill, but reflecting that his own finances were by no means equal to the expences of another trip to the University, and that it was extremely probable he might one day be enabled to reimburse the money, he consented.

consented to receive it, and prepared to give a note for the same.

"Stuff," (cried Mr. H——) I will take no note—what is such a trifle between you and me."

"Pardon," (returned the other) I can except it on no other terms than those of a loan, which I shall hold myself bound to repay as soon as it shall be in my power."

Mr. H—— who knew the scrupulous delicacy of his friend, remonstrated no farther. A note was given, and Frederic put the bill into his pocket book, intending to leave London on the next day. When every thing was ready for his departure, he stepped into the parlour to take leave of Mrs. H——, whom he found alone,

and

and in tears ; without giving him time to form conjectures as to the cause of this appearance, she began as follows :

“ Mountford, you well remember the high esteem which my father and mother entertained for yourself, was the means of their receiving your friend with cordiality ; and, for my part, I had so firm a belief of your honour, that I looked on it as a security for that of Mr. H——.”

“ Pray, Madam, be more explicit. I am at loss what conclusion to draw from this preface.”

“ You have no occasion to play the hypocrite any longer, Sir ; every thing is too well known to me ; your base connivance at (if the whole plan be not your's) the perfidy of this unworthy man.”

“ I protest,

"I protest, Madam,—nay, by all that is honourable, I affirm, that I do not in the least comprehend you."

"Trifle not with misery,—you know too well that I am not the lawful wife of Mr. H—."

"Not his lawful wife (with the utmost astonishment) what can you mean;—who, Madam, can have distressed you by a doubt of this nature."

"It is more than doubt—it is mournful conviction—Mr. H— has just assured me of it himself."

"Nay, then, most injured, most honoured Lady, I conjure you inform me all you can of this iniquitous proceeding.—I swear to you that till this moment I never
thought

thought you otherwise than his wife; and still I trust you must think you are so."

"I am strongly inclined to believe you, Mr. Mountford,—and therefore will treat you with confidence. Know then, that for some time past I have observed a coolness in Mr. H——. Tired of the dissipated life I have led ever since I have been in England, a life, Sir, (weeping) I was not accustomed to while with my parents, I entreated him to convey me to his country seat, and as the Viscount, I know, is daily expected at home, I wished to be in readiness to receive him: to be favoured with his blessing, for having basely deserted my own parents, my poor heart yearned for a solace of that kind. (Here Mrs. H—— wept so bitterly, that her voice was inarticulate; Mountford, indeed, joined his tears with her's; after a little space she resumed,) "

refumed,) “ On my becoming more than usually strenuous on that point this morning, Mr. H——, with a cool effrontery, thought proper to disclose the whole deception : the person whom I was taught to consider as the Chaplain of the English Ambassador, was, it seems, no other than a wretch he had hired to personate that character ; the marriage, of course, was all a sham, and I, the wretched victim of the blackest villainy ever practised towards an unhappy woman. My friends, my happiness, my honour, irrecoverably lost ; what but the lowest abyss of human misery can be now my lot ? ”

Mountford, after a pause replied, “ My dear lady, I entreat you, if possible, to repress your emotion, and to be patient till I shall have discoursed with Mr. H—— on the unhappy subject ; however,

he

he has in this instance acted unworthy of that integrity I ever thought he possessed; I cannot think him wholly abandoned to baseness, he must, he will still do you justice. I will postpone my journey till something satisfactory to yourself, to the laws of honour and justice, can be effected. He is gone to the Park, and thither I will immediately follow him."

Bidding the lady be comforted, he hastily withdrew, as he expected Mr. H—— was in the Park; Mountford came up with him just as he had thrown himself in a careless attitude on one of the benches: "Frederic, why surely I thought you had by this time been half way to Oxford."

"An unexpected incident has detained me, (gravely.) I am under some uneasiness H——, concerning an intimation I have just

just received, that you are not actually married. It cannot, I hope be true!"

" And why not, (smiling) is there any thing so wonderful in such an affair."

" Pshaw ! you jest; prithee, my friend, satisfy me as to this point."

" Then, I am not."

From so bold a confession of baseness, Mountford could not be induced to form any sanguine expectations of the business he had come on ; however, suppressing his resentment he replied,

" My friendship for you, my dear H—, induces me to admit every possible excuse for your conduct, that youth or passion may alledge; we have all our
unguarded

unguarded moments, but an honest heart will endeavour to retrieve its errors as soon as it becomes sensible of them ; and therefore I do not doubt, but you will immediately resolve on doing justice to this lady, by legal marriage."

" Not quite so sanguine, neither Mountford ; perhaps I may take that step some time or other."

" But the lady's injured honour calls for immediate satisfaction."

" It calls in vain then, if nothing less will satisfy it."

" Tell me, however ; do you really think it incumbent on you to do her the justice I mention, at some time."

" I do

“ I do not see the absolute necessity of it; is she not treated in all respects as my lawful wife?”

“ Then why hesitate to make her really such.”

“ Because, perhaps, it may be expedient at some future period to be disengaged; the Viscount will probably choose to assert the prerogative of a father in providing himself a daughter-in-law.”

“ The Viscount: What then was not that letter genuine, which you shewed me in France?”

“ Yes; it was the genuine effort of my profound policy, in order to soothe your romantic punctilios.”

“ I ”

“ Contemptible

“ Contemptible duplicity ! and was this the man I esteemed above myself ? Know, Sir, that unless you resolve instantly to marry Mademoiselle de L——, I will unfold the whole of this base proceeding to your father.”

“ Softly, softly, Mountford ; I cannot indeed consent exactly to your measures, but to convince you that I am not quite the ungenerous fellow you suppose me, I will immediately place her above the fear of any inconveniences she may receive by this idle affair, by settling on her an annuity of three hundred pounds a year, independent of any connection that may subsist between us hereafter.”

“ Do not deceive yourself, H—— ; the lady, if I mistake not, has a soul superior to such sordid views, she will accept of nothing less than marriage.”

“ Then

" Then you may e'en take her yourself, if that be the case ; for my part, I will never make her a wife in any other sense than she now is."

" And is this your serious resolution, Sir ?"

" It is."

" Farewell, then ! I once loved and honoured you, but it was I find under a fictitious character ; the disguise is dropped, and I see nothing but what must inspire my infinite contempt."

With this reply, and a countenance more expressive of sorrow than anger, Mr. Mountford abruptly retired, and returning to Mrs. H ——, whom he found in a most disconsolate condition, he was forced

to acknowledge, that his endeavours had not yet met with desired success, but advised the Lady to try what it was possible to effect on her lover by dint of sweetness, rather than invective, assuring her at the same time that he would defer his departure to Oxford in order to wait the result of her efforts, which he yet hoped would prove agreeable to her wishes; but in case it should not, he begged her to believe him ready to perform any act of friendship the nature of her case, and the sense he himself retained of her injury might direct: with this advise he took his leave, not choosing to remain in the habitation of a man, whose conduct he thought it incumbent on him to resent. Scarcely was he departed than Mr. H—— returned, somewhat chagrined, and much out of humour; without going into the apartment in which his Lady was, he

immediately ordered his valet to prepare things for his departure into the country within half an hour ; he then wrote a letter, and ordering the footman to carry it to his mistress, instantly sat off from town. On opening the paper, Mademoiselle de L— read the following words :

I cannot be entirely pleased with your conduct, Antonia, in divulging so imprudently the secret of our affairs. Are you then so blind as not to perceive that a passion so ardent as mine wants no bonds; nay, so averse was I ever to those ties called legal, that had I been actually married to you I should infallibly have ceased to love you from that hour. No, Madam, we will have no ties but those which love has made. But, to give you the fullest conviction of generosity and tenderness, I here send you a carte-blanc, with my name duly signed,

signed, and formally attested; fill it up with your own conditions; whatever they are (except marriage) I will cheerfully fulfil; for the happiness of the divine Antonia is, and ever will be, the diligent care of her

Ever faithful, ever fond,

AUGUSTUS H—.

P.S. Reflect deliberately on what I propose: I shall return again to town within three days, and will then expect to see the frowns which have lately clouded that angelic face converted into tender smiles.

The Lady having perused this epistle, resolved to send for Mountford, who had taken care to let her know where he might be found in case his presence should be necessary. As soon as he arrived, "Ah, Sir, (cried she) I am now reduced to a fatal certainty of my misery; here are the

explicit sentiments of that unworthy man." She then gave him the letter to peruse; and, when he had done so, she resumed, "Now, tell me, Mr. Mountford, if there can be a human being more entirely wretched: I have quitted the arms of the best of parents, my country, my dearest connections, for dishonour, ruin, infamy."— Here her grief became so violent that Mountford verily thought she would have fainted, he supported her in his arms, telling her that her case was not yet absolutely hopeless, for that much might be hoped from the character of Lord M—, who, he might venture to assure her, would compel his son to be just, as soon as ever he should be made acquainted with the affair.

"And do you imagine, Sir, (returned she in a determined voice) that I wo ld consent

consent to be forced on Mr. H— as a wife. No, tenderly as I love him, I would sooner perish."

" What, then, my dear Madam, can be done."

" There is but one way left me, which is to tear myself from him for ever; yes, to tear myself, for I own the step will cost me dear; unworthy as he is, I love him as my husband; but since he refuses that sacred character, my soul shudders at the idea of continuing with him in any other light. Ah, Sir, (weeping) I was nourished in the bosom of virtue, I imbibed even in infancy its awful dictates, shall I now discard them for the indulgence of a fond passion, the object of which is no longer worthy of it. I am indeed unhappy, but I will not be base."

Charmed

Charmed with these noble sentiments, Frederic replied, " Inform me then, Madam, what you propose to do, and how I can assist you in these laudible resolutions, which I would facilitate even at the expense of my life."

" I have only to request, Sir, that you will direct me, as I am a stranger in this kingdom, the readiest way to obtain a passage to France."

" I will do more; I will go before you thither, and solicit the kind indulgence of your offended parents; I will throw myself at their feet, and never quit them till, by a candid representation of your injuries, I dispose them to a cordial reception of their unfortunate, yet noble daughter"

" I thank you for your friendly warmth,

benevolence

Mr.

Mr. Mountford, (returned the Lady with a face bedewed in tears) but that is not the step I would take: I know my father has too high a sense of the honour of his family, ever to be prevailed on to receive me; and, if he would, how durst I now, covered with infamy, lift up my head in that society where I have been wont to appear with an unfullied reputation. Yet, though the doors of pity are shut against me there, I trust that every asylum is not denied to so wretched a being. In the Austrian Netherlands, Sir, I have an aunt who is the Abbess of a monastery; could I reach those peaceful walls, I know her charity would be extended to receive an unhappy wanderer."

" Your scheme appears so very eligible, Madam, that I can perceive but one obstacle attending it, which is the inconvenience

inconvenience you will have to sustain during a long journey without companion or attendants."

" Those inconveniences, Sir, are only formidable to minds unacquainted with greater evils; the truly miserable are superior to fears of this kind; the indigent have nothing to lose, and those who are disgusted with life feel not the dread of death: though I confess I have not so far availed myself of Mr. H—'s liberality, as to be provided against such a contingency as this, yet could I once be beyond the reach of his pursuits, I doubt not of effecting my design even though I should owe my subsistence on the way to the hand of charity."

" Noble young Lady, how sincerely I admire and revere your virtuous resolution.

CONVERSATION

I will

I will, myself, Madam, attend you to Dover, and see you safely embarked; and for the rest, this note, will, in conjunction with your own prudence, provide you against contingencies."

" No Sir, (returned the Lady), I will by no means accept your pecuniary assistance: I already feel my mind oppressed by the sense it will ever retain of your friendly conduct: Excuse me, I cannot bear a greater weight of obligation."

" Alas, (cried Mountford, while his eyes were moistened with tears), how little does this comfort with the feelings of my soul, for having been, though innocently, accessory to the wrongs of a virtuous family. But since you are pleased, Madam, to call my insignificant zeal an obligation, I know you will think yourself

E 5 neces-

necessitated to repay it if possible; this then, is the return I ask; accept this trifle, and the account will be balanced in my estimation."

Had Mademoiselle de L. been acquainted with the real state of his finances, or had she suspected that the note he offered her (which was the one he had some time since received of Mr. H.) had comprised the whole of his wealth, she certainly would have combated the extreme of poverty, rather than have accepted it, but she was a stranger to his affairs, and during her residence in England, had acted so disinterested a part, that in fact the few Louisd'ores she had brought from France were expended, and had it not been for this friendly assistance, must really have begged subsistence on her journey; she, therefore at length consented to accept
that

that generous offer, with tears of gratitude and resolving to avail herself of Mr. H—'s seasonable absence, the next morning put herself under the protection of Mr. Mountford, who, regardless of the resentment of that gentleman, or any other consideration but those which the purity and rectitude of his own heart suggested, conveyed her to Dover. In a few hours after their arrival there, the packet was ready for sailing; he accompanied her to the water side, where the lady repeated a thousand ardent wishes that the generosity of his conduct towards herself might be rewarded with every felicity; they took leave of each other with tears; Mountford returned pensively to his inn, and thence took coach again for London.

On his return to that city, a variety of painful feelings took possession of his soul;

he saw himself thrown as a fugitive on the world, destitute either of money, friends or the means of subsistence ; he knew enough of mankind to be convinced, that the part he had taken in the late business, however consistent with generosity and integrity, could not be acceptable to Mr. H. —, the prospect of establishment lately held out to him by that gentleman, must therefore of course have vanished ; he had thoughts of applying to his uncle ; but the known disposition of Mrs. Butler, as well as her personal aversion to himself, checked that intention, and after much anxious deliberation he could see no method so eligible as that of offering himself to the compting-house, as his perfect knowledge of figures might in some measure qualify him for such a station ; with this view he one day steped into a coffee house with intent to look over the papers, where he had

had the good fortune to meet with a merchant, who was no less remarkable for the benevolence, than the honour of his character; they fell into discourse, in which Frederic happening to divulge his scheme of life, the gentleman was so well pleased both with his abilities and candour, that he consented to receive him into his family in quality of clerk, on very advantageous terms. An incident so singularly fortunate, could not but be considered by Mountford with the most satisfactory feelings: he returned to his lodgings in a very different temper of mind from that in which he had left them; far from esteeming the situation which fortunately awaited him, as at all derogatory to the dignity of a man of learning; however highly he thought of literary attainments, it was his opinion that practical industry, probity, and other social virtues, were more immediately the

duty

duty of a social being, than those pursuits which are apt to take off the attention from the active virtues of human life. A new field seemed open to his view, and that line of life which must necessarily extend connections with mankind, promised also an extension of happiness as well as usefulness. In fine he was preparing to take up his residence at the good merchant's, when an incident occurred which put an end to so fair a prospect.

Mr. Mountford in his proceedings respecting Mademoiselle de L, had solely attended to the dictates of pity towards an unfortunate and injured woman, as well as to a secret compunction he felt in himself, for having been in some measure accessory to her ruin, by the endeavours he had exerted to introduce Mr. H to her acquaintance; his resentment of that unworthy

unworthy deception, practised on her unsuspecting tenderness, was so great, that he neither sought nor desired to conceal the part he had acted in the lady's escape.

The nature of guilt is ever suspicious, Mr. H. did not therefore leave town without employing proper emissaries to watch the conduct of one whom he had just reason to suppose was not a friend to the principles he had discovered; every step of Mountford's conduct respecting that affair was faithfully reported to him, and as his passion for that lady was not yet so far cooled as to induce him to think a separation desirable; the disappointment it had now sustained, urged him to seek revenge. It is astonishing to consider how grossly the heart of man is capable of deceiving itself on some occasions; base and dishonourable as his own procedure had been, it never occurred to him, that he was in fact

fact the only culpable person ; the resentment therefore which ought to have been directed towards himself, fell severely on his quondam friend, to facilitate which, he conceived a most favourable opportunity offered ; he doubted not but Mountford had been at some considerable expence in favouring the departure of Mademoiselle de L—, and well knowing the utmost latitude of his purse, he determined on arresting him, on his note of hand, for the fifty pounds. The ungenerous design was accordingly executed with all possible dispatch. Mountford, not much surprised at the measure, calmly surrendered himself to the power of the law. “ You may spare yourself the trouble, gentlemen, (said he) of taking me to a spunging house ; since I have neither money nor bail to offer, let me be conducted to prison at once.”

“ D—n him (cried the bailiff, somewhat disappointed)

disappointed) the sheep is not worth fleecing, I believe; let us away with him out of hand." Then hurrying his prisoner into a hackney coach, without farther ceremony he conveyed him to the fleet-prison.

C H A P. XXII.

THE sight of so many miserable objects as inhabited that house of woe, struck a sensible damp on the spirits of poor Mountford, as the satisfaction which some of them expressed at the arrival of a new companion, gave him a shocking idea of the human heart, which could be capable of rejoicing that another was compelled to drink of their bitter cup.

" There

"There is a pleasure (said he) in communicating happiness, but the disposition which can experience the same sensation in diffusing misery, must be a diabolical one." However, he had not made so little advantage of his studies, as not to recollect many a philosophical ~~alge~~, which pointed out the proper character of a wise man to consist in bearing adversity with fortitude — reason also proved the inutility of repining under an evil which could not be removed, instead of which he thought it would much better become him to endeavour to extract as much comfort as he could from his present situation, especially as it appeared likely to be a lasting one — his first step therefore as soon as he was alone, was, to take a review of his stock of cash, which he found to amount to about seven guineas, which he had no sooner done, than the keeper

of the prison waited on him to know his choice of apartments, shewing him several of various prices. Frederic, therefore, fixed on that which he thought best adapted to the state of his finances; a wretched chamber indeed, the only furniture of which, consisted in a sorry flock bed without curtains; an old stool; a broken table; a few iron bars roughly fixed by way of coal grate. Sad accommodation, indeed, for one who had ever been accustomed to the elegant conveniences of life. “ Pshaw (cried Frederic, suppressing some uncomfortable feelings) it is luxury, which by introducing a train of artificial wants, has augmented the natural misery of mankind; in the first periods of the world, heroes and conquerors would have been content with such a palace as this.

He then, drawing the stool to the
wretched

wretched plank which served him for a table, drew out his ink horn, and penned a letter to the merchant, in which, with proper expressions for his generosity, he told him briefly, that he was obliged to decline the employment he had proposed, as business of a particular nature had otherwise disposed of him. This being dispatched by the penny post, he very philosophically betook himself to his books, which he had taken care to have conveyed to him, and in the amusement which these afforded passed several weeks; till his cash being nearly exhausted, he began to be seriously alarmed as to the means of future subsistence; rumaging over his papers one day in a very pensive mood, he met with some essays and a few poetical pieces, which he had composed at the University; a thought struck him, that these, properly arranged, might furnish a

bedotaw

miscellaneous

miscellaneous volume, the disposal of which might probably fetch him a few pieces, with this view he recollects the name of an eminent publisher, to whom he determined on sending a note on the business, together with the work itself for his inspection: the bookseller happening to be a person of humanity, paid him a visit at his wretched dwelling, and after observing that the essays were well written, and the poetical works not destitute of merit, told him that the world was overstocked with publications of that kind, and that except they bore the name of some favourite author, could not hope for a very favourable reception. “ Nevertheless (added he) though I do not care to purchase the copy, I will venture on the publication conjointly with yourself, though I dare not promise that the sale will reimburse the expences of the press.”

Prompted

Prompted perhaps by the natural partiality which every author may be supposed to have for his works, Mountford assented to the proposal, after which the bookseller probably moved by compassion at the situation of a young man, who apparently discovered very splendid abilities, said to him ; “ As I perceive, Sir, you are a person of letters, I believe it will lie in my power to do you some service, by recommending you to the acquaintance of a certain gentleman, whose liberality will not be wanting in bestowing proper rewards on genius.” As he did not choose to be more explicit on the subject, Frederic was obliged to say in general terms, that he was obliged to him, though, in fact, he hardly knew for what. The publisher then took leave, and left him once more to his cogitations. As it was probable that a considerable time must elapse before

before he could possibly expect to receive any emoluments from the publication (supposing it to sell) he found himself obliged to be content with a bare subsistence of the animal frame, though, indeed, the scanty commons to which he was reduced, scarcely deserved that term. One day just as he had merely repeated the formulary of dinner, (for indeed it was no more) by swallowing a few mouthfuls of bread, and a draft of the pure element, he heard a rap at the door of his apartment, and rising to open it was surprised by the sight of a well dressed gentleman, to whose face he was an entire stranger: poor Frederic, somewhat disconcerted at so unexpected a visit, did the honours of his apartment as well as he could, by seating the gentleman on the solitary stool, after which he himself chose for seat the foot of his truckle bed. The stranger,

whose address was perfectly polite, soon relieved his embarrassment, by declaring the purport of his visit, which he said was in consequence of recommendation from Mr. ——— the bookseller.

“ I have conceived Sir, (said he) a very favourable opinion of your abilities, from some pieces of your's in the hands of that gentleman, and really think such talents may be rendered highly serviceable to the community if properly directed. Pray, Sir, have you ever made politics your study?”

“ Not particularly so, returned Mountford, though I own I have found much pleasure in investigating the constitution and interests of my country.”

“ Then I presume you have properly weighed

weighed the nature of that popular subject, which has been, and still is, depending in the house."

Mountford, said he, had considered it.

" Then, Sir, (resumed the other) I cannot but think the public may receive very happy lights from such a pen as yours, which could not fail of placing the dangerous tendency of ministerial venality in its proper point of view; now if you will engage to ——"

" What, Sir, (exclaimed he, who now began to comprehend the drift of the discourse) you wish me to write in defence of the opposing party."

" To be sure I do."

VOL. II.

F

" You

" You must pardon me, then; though I would never be biased by party views, nor so far respect any man as implicitly to admire his measures whether right or wrong, I cannot undertake this task without violating my own principles."

" Your most obedient, Sir, replied the gentleman (rising with an air of displeasure) I did not think the force of principle might have been so great in these apartments."

" An honest man will feel their power in any place."

" Very true (with a smile of contempt) I wish you a good morning, Sir," bowing very sarcastically.

Thus ended the negotiation, highly we
think

think to Mountford's honour, though certainly very contrary to his interest; hitherto he had spent his time much alone, seldom conversing with any of his fellow prisoners, from whose appearances he was led to form but a poor idea of social pleasure; tired, however, with absolute solitude, and sinking under the weight of his own reflections, he began by degrees to mingle with the society which that wretched mansion afforded; here he was shocked by a series of the most impious and lewd discourses, and saw with horror, the hardened front of vice rendered still more impenetrable by despondency. One prisoner of a grave and placid countenance attracted his attention, as appearing a more civilized being than the generality: It was a middle aged man, whose aspect seemed to wear the appearance of pious resignation, as his manners discovered

much of urbanity and a cultivated mind; with this person Frederic would often enter into conversation, till by degrees an intimacy was formed between them, which tended mutually to lighten the burden of sorrow. As they were one day sitting together, Mr. Eden gave the following relation of his life and misfortunes.

“ I am the younger son, said he, of a very respectable family in the west of England, but an unhappy passion which my father indulged for the pleasures of the turf, and the chace, not only exceeded the bounds of a plentiful estate, but was the cause of his circumstances becoming so much embarrassed, that at his death my eldest brother became possessed of an estate deeply incumbered by mortgages, and as for myself, I was left to make my way in the world as I could, with a fortune

of

of five hundred pounds only, bequeathed by a relation. As my father, if he ever reflected on the state of his affairs, had taken care to keep it a secret from his family ; I was bred in the expectation of a considerable fortune, entirely remote from the means or even the idea of supporting myself by trade ; however as there was no other resource left me, I was obliged to turn my thoughts either to this or beggary ; in short by the recommendation of a friend, I formed acquaintance with a very worthy gentleman who carried on an extensive wholesale trade in linnens ; I would have presented him with a handsome premium to give me an insight into the business, as I did not doubt such a step would answer all the purposes of a tedious apprenticeship, for which I was now too old, being at that time about the age of two and twenty. Mr. M —— would

not accept the offered premium, with an almost unparalleled generosity, he gave me every information necessary for my commencing tradesman, and also had the goodness to recommend me to the best markets for commodities; at length I took a house in — street, laid out my capital in stock, and obtained credit for more; but habits for business and application, Sir, are to be acquired in youth, or they rarely become effectual; though I was naturally inclined to sobriety and a domestic life, yet the necessary attention in my new mode of life was irksome; however, as I was a competent arithmetician, I regularly inspected my books, and though I was too indolent to aim at riches, I was enough of an œconomist to live comfortably within the bounds of my profits; upon the whole I had the character of a good tradesman, and a respectable member
of

of society; I was well received in every family where I chose to visit, and might, I believe, have married with considerable advantage to my fortune but I had hitherto met with no lady to my taste.

As I had ever continued on the best terms with my brother, I accepted his repeated invitations, and one summer paid him a visit at the family seat; he received me with the greatest cordiality, and we passed several weeks together in the strictest amity, till happening to go to one of the fashionable watering places, we there became acquainted with a young lady who resided with a rich aunt, from whom she had great expectations; the old lady appeared fond of our society, and suffered us to escort her niece to the public places, who sometimes would dance at a ball with one of us, sometimes the

other, as we happened to be first in engaging her. Miss Warton was one of those singular women who could possess the most eminent accomplishments both of mind and person, without seeming to know she did so; or in other words she was at the same time the most lovely, and the most unaffected woman in the place; her beauty, sweetness, and modesty, wrought so forcibly on my heart, that I soon entertained for her the sincerest affection; in short, I found an opportunity of discovering my passion to her, and had the unspeakable satisfaction to find it not unacceptable. Before I addressed myself to the aunt, I thought the friendship which my brother had ever expressed for me was deserving my confidence, and in the frankness of my soul I told him all; he confessed there was much to be said in excuse for my passion, however precipitately

precipitately it might have been formed.

" That the attachment is a hasty one (added he) cannot be denied; you know nothing of Miss Warton's character, and therefore I would not advise you to be in any hurry as to the demanding the old lady's consent." I told him that it was impossible for me to indulge even a doubt in that particular, and that I was determined on disclosing my sentiments to Mrs. Warton. Finding himself foiled in that argument, he had recourse to another, though I was very far at that time from suspecting his duplicity. " Consider, however, Bob, (said he) that Mrs. Warton is yet a stranger to you, and consequently will not give her consent to a person she knows so little of; in my opinion you had best take time for that measure;" to this I replied, that I would candidly represent my affairs to her, and, though I am

not rich (continued I) I have at least a good prospect of maintaining a wife."

Some company dropping in the discourse broke off; I have since however thought that any but so unsuspecting a person as myself, might have discovered a coolness in my brother's behaviour from that hour; but I could see nothing but my Fanny's attractions, nor reflect on any thing, but the felicity of calling her mine.

In a few days after, I boldly discovered to Mrs. Warton the passion I entertained for her charming niece; she heard me with polite attention, and when I had done speaking replied nearly in those words: "I suppose, Sir, you are unacquainted with the sentiments of your brother in favour of my niece; otherwise you would have saved both yourself and me the

the trouble of this application; I will briefly inform you, that however I might respect you, Mr. Robert Eden, yet I must own the proposals of your brother have the warmest share in my approbation, and to which I have given my full consent."

" Surely (I returned) I cannot have been so unfortunate as to have opposed my brother on a point of so tender a nature; but do me the favour, madam, to inform me how long it is since he first addressed you on this subject."

" The last evening, Sir, was the time that I received that intimation."

Struck with my brother's perfidy, I was unable to reply, but rushing instantly out of the room went in quest of my beloved Fanny, who I could plainly see had been in tears.

“ Is it possible (cried I, with the greatest emotion) that I am rivalled by my brother, in a point on which depends the sole felicity of my life.”

“ It is most true, Sir, (replied she) that your brother has addressed my aunt to that purpose ; he has also given her such an account of your situation in life as rendered her deaf to every thing I could say in your favour ; for indeed I frankly acknowledged my partiality in that respect, which has offended her so much that she immediately resolved to quit this place to-morrow morning.”

“ What then (reduced nearly to distraction) must I see you no more, my adorable Miss Warton, must I tamely resign you to my happy brother.”

“ Be assured, (replied she,) I will never
be

be his; the baseness of his conduct in this particular, would render him ever the object of my aversion, had I even been disposed to favour him before."

All the rhetoric which the most ardent passion could suggest on this occasion, was insufficient to extort from my lovely Fanny any other assurance, than that she would never give her hand to my brother, as for any thing further, she said, she was solely dependant on her aunt, without a shilling of her own, and from the account which I had given her of my circumstances, she judged it highly imprudent to offend Mrs. Warton, by an open avowal of our mutual attachment — she, however favoured me with her address, and condescended to promise to receive my letters, which she would contrive to have privately conveyed to her. Before we could

could resolve to part, she was told my brother was in the parlour. "The visit (said she) is not unexpected, I was prepared for it by my aunt, you may safely rely, however, on my sincerity."

With that assurance she bid me adieu; I returned to my lodgings, where in about an hour after my brother also arrived, evidently much out of humour, the cause of which I conjectured with much satisfaction, and exulted in the conviction of Miss Warton's fidelity; but though he never dropped a single syllable to me on the subject, it was impossible there could be any sincere harmony between us after such an incident, and as I discovered in his behaviour a sort of rooted resentment, (though certainly it was himself only who had acted culpably) I determined on returning immediately to town; which, however,

I did

I did not do, without being first assured that Mrs. Warton had taken her neice with her into Bedfordshire.

From this time I enjoyed the happiness of an epistolary correspondence with my amiable mistress, who told me in one of her letters, that her aunt had conceived from my brother's account, the blackest idea of my moral character, as well as an unfavourable opinion of my circumstances; that her tenderness for her, induced her to be tolerably pacified as to the rejection of him, as long as she believed all connections to have subsided between her and myself; "we must therefore wait the event of time, (continued that lovely girl) which may be more favourable than we expect."

It was during this interval that I became sensible

sensible of the advantages of wealth, the love which I felt for Miss Warton, roused me from my natural indolence, I applied myself to business with the utmost assiduity; my stock was enlarged, my connections extended, of course my profits were daily augmented, and I began to flatter myself with the hopes of soon being in a situation to brave the utmost resentment of Mrs. Warton, who about that time fell sick, and after a short illness expired, leaving her niece sole heiress to her large possessions, but on express condition of never marrying me; in failure of which, the fortune was to reverse to a distant relation.

This circumstance was considered as a grievous event by my Fanny, though, for my part I looked on it as a happy opportunity of manifesting the disinterestedness

ness of my affection ; I solicited her favour with more ardour than ever, and she condescended to give me the most unequivocal proofs of it, by consenting to honour me with her hand. Our marriage was celebrated in a decent time, and she retired from affluence to mediocrity, though if the most tender assurances and a constant smile of content are to be credited, she has never repented the exchange; no, not under the pressure of circumstances which were sufficient to have diminished the fervor of an affection less pure, less virtuous than her's; and I confess, Mr. Mountford, it is the reflection that I am still dear to that best of women, which helps to support my spirits under my present misfortunes.

The news of our marriage was no sooner become public, than my brother thought

thought proper to express his remorse, for having been the probable means of my wife's losing so considerable a fortune, and to evince the sincerity of his contrition he begged we would permit him to make up in some measure the misfortune, by accepting from him whatever was wanting to enable us to set out in life with some eclat. What shall I say to you, Sir; shall I own that fraternal tenderness at last got the better of resentment; "Yes, (cried Mountford) you may own it with triumph; I shall honour you the more for the confession."

Happy in each other (resumed Mr. Eden) our souls were full of benevolence to every fellow creature, nor did we regret that wealth which we were convinced could have added nothing to our felicity; both Mrs. Eden and myself were ready to

throw

throw the veil of compassion on a conduct, which we were willing to impute to an excess of passion, as we considered the present behaviour of this brother, to manifest a soul naturally superior to such baseness. In a word we freely forgave the part, and though we neither would accept, or stood in need of any pecuniary assistance from him, we sincerely joined in expressing our cordial dispositions, and gave him a pressing invitation to our house ; he accepted it, and seemed so heartily to participate in our happiness, that it was impossible we should feel any sentiments towards him but those of unfeigned amity.

In due time I was the happy farther of three sons and a daughter. That anxiety which every parent does, or ought to feel for his offspring, prompted me to wish my capital somewhat larger, that I might by extending

extending my business, be enabled to lay up something for their future establishment in life. I hinted that desire to my brother, who, with the utmost alacrity provided me with five thousand pounds, and for some time every thing went on as well as I could even hope for; but by the unexpected failure of a factor whom I employed abroad, I lost a sum greater than that which I had borrowed of my brother.

And now, Sir, the veil dropped from the face of villainy, and discovered that the friendship which this vile brother had so long assumed, was nothing more than a specious colouring to conceal a heart implacably bent on revenge, for an affront which it seems he had never pardoned: I mean my possessing a greater share in Miss Warton's affections than himself; and I have since found by indubitable proofs,

proofs, that the failure of the factor, I have mentioned was at his instigation, who knowing me to have considerable effects in his hands, concerted the scheme of his becoming bankrupt.

It is an instance scarcely within the limits of credibility, nor could I myself have believed it, had not the behaviour of my brother afforded fatal confirmation, for applying to him (as I did when my creditors alarmed enforced their several demands) in full confidence of the assistance he had so often afforded, he cut me short, by observing, that I already owed him more than I was worth, and that having a particular occasion for money he must desire payment. In fine Sir, that very evening I was arrested at his suit, and forced amidst the tears, the faintings, of an agonizing wife, the shrieks of my poor

babes,

babes to this horrid mansion, where I have already passed fifteen months, a sufferer, not from the sense of my own misery so much as by my feelings on the account of my dear Fanny and her poor helpless infants.

" And what is become of them," said Mountford wiping his eyes.

" They are at a village about fifteen miles from town, my wife wisely judged that the best proof she could give me of her affection, would be discoverable rather in seeking to support our children, than preventing an unavailing sorrow in this place, retired to the country, where, by keeping a little school she makes a shift, not only to support the poor dear creatures, but also to supply me with that assistance, without which, I must long since have fallen a prey to famine."

Here

Here Mountford heaved a profound groan, clasped the hand of Mr. Eden, dropped a tear over it, but uttered not a syllable,

C H A P. XXIII.

THE production of Mr. Mounford's pen, was no sooner offered to the public, than it met with a more rapid sale than the bookseller had expected, in consequence of which he received ten guineas from that gentleman on account. This seasonable supply, together with what he afterwards received from the same quarter, enabled him to support his wretched existence, during

the

the remainder of his continuance in prison, in which place he had now passed some what more than eleven months, when sauntering one day amidst a group of unhappy beings, he heard a confused murmur of 'tis she? 'tis she! and shortly after a prisoner vociferated, "now my lads stand forward, we shall soon see who is the lucky dog." There was it seems a venerable gentlewoman who passed for an oddity amongst her acquaintance, that together with other singular whims, had one of visiting the several prisons in the metropolis, constantly on the returns of her birth day, when she made it a rule to liberate one debtor in each. Such a custom could not fail of exciting due attention in the inhabitants of these dismal mansions, and accordingly her appearance had been anxiously expected in the Fleet for some time past. No sooner did the
good

good Lady appear, than the whole assembly crowded about her, clamorously representing their respective woes, to which, however, she gave no other answer, than by looking attentively around, as if she designed her beneficence should be directed rather by her eyes, than her ears: at length she espied Mountford apart from the vociferous group, who apparently was regardless of the whole procedure, and stood pensively leaning on the back of a chair. Whether there was any thing in his figure particularly striking to attract the notice of the lady, or what is more probable, she discovered in him the indubitable aspect of modest merit, certain it is, that she moved directly towards him, which being observed by the rest of the prisoners, some of them, envious of the good fortune which seemed to await him, exclaimed, "Hang it, that is not fair."

And one, more busy than the rest, cried aloud, “ Why, Madam, that is but a noviciate, he has not been here a year yet.”

“ Pray Sir, said the Lady, (addressing herself to Mountford) can you point me out the object, amidst the vast number of sufferers in this place, to whom my assistance may be most properly directed.”

“ I can, Madam,” (pointing to Mr. Eden, who was at the window of his solitary apartment) “ there is one eminently deserving it.”

“ I have such an opinion, Sir, of your ingenuousness, (surveying Mountford with marks of astonishment) that I would feign hear from you the particulars, which in your idea, so peculiarly merit compassion.”

“ He

" He has an amiable wife, Madam, and four small children."

" Go then, young man, and tell him that he is free, and that he owes his liberty to your representation of his case; direct him to depute a proper person to Mrs. Barclay, of Kensington, to-morrow morning, and the debt shall be discharged, whatever it may be."

Mountford, everjoyed at the prospect of that worthy gentleman's enlargement, and making the lady a grateful bow, instantly withdrew, to convey the welcome tidings. Mrs. Barclay having thus discharged her annual custom, quitted the prison, amidst the murmurs of all who were not at that time the partakers of her bounty, making a simular observation to that of a certain celebrated personage,

who used to say, that in bestowing one favour, he made an hundred dissatisfied.

Yes, and Mrs. Barclay, it certainly was, Reader, that phenomenon of benevolence, who could content herself with the mere necessaries of life, in order to bestow the surplus of her large fortune on the wants of her fellow-creatures : but we must do her the justice also to allow her to have considered the disinterested generosity of Mountford, in the light which it deserved. Having, by Mr. Eden's means acquired the knowledge of his name, and the sum for which he was confined, she sent the amount of the debt, or indeed something more, enclosed in a letter to him, which contained the following words :

“ Merit, like what your recent conduct
has

has discovered, ought not to go unrewarded ; accept, young gentleman, the means of liberty, and be as happy as you deserve to be, in the estimation of

A. BARCLAY.

Thus, unexpectedly possessed of the means of liberty, Frederic lost no time in settling the affair which had occasioned his confinement ; after which, he departed from the Fleet, to the lodging he had formerly occupied : though the joy he felt at the thoughts of his enlargement, was considerably abated when he reflected, that he was not only without friends to facilitate the mode of his future subsistence ; but that the ignominious circumstances he had lately endured, would prove an effectual bar to his advancement in any line of life. It is rather to be wondered at, that he did not endeavour to improve the

benevolent disposition of Mrs. Barclay still farther to his advantage, but the truth was, he considered the obligation she had already conferred in so grateful a light, as precluded all thoughts of seeking farther to excite her beneficence, he therefore only writ her a letter of thanks, in which, though he said every thing which gratitude could say, it fell very short of what he really felt; as soon as the first pleasing emotions, which the consciousness of renewed liberty excited, had subsided, he sunk into the most dreadful despondency at the review of his forlorn situation.

“ This vast and crowded city, (said he, to himself,) affords not a single being to whom I am known, nor does the world itself yield one person that is any ways interested in my welfare or concerns : the prodigious crowds that pass the streets have their respective homes, and their social connections,

unlov'd

while

while I am destitute of all that can render life desirable. Surely a prison itself is an eligible receptacle for such a wretch !” When he uttered this soliloquy, he was leaning against a corner of the window, mechanically gazing on the passengers in the street, when he happened to discover his uncle’s carriage; convinced, by this, that the family were in town, he determined on paying a visit to Mr. Butler, not doubting, but he should receive direction, if not assistance, from that quarter. With this intention, he equipped himself in a decent suit of apparel, for, neither during his confinement or since, had he appeared in any thing better than an old suit of black, which had been his travelling drefs, consequently his wardrobe was not much impaired. As soon as he was dressed, he sat out for the square, and enquiring for Mr. Butler, was immediately

shewn into a parlour; the footman having been lately hired, was a stranger to his person, as well as to the etiquette of polite life, for without stopping to ask the name, immediately ushered him into the dining-room, where Mrs. Butler was sitting alone. Frederic's embarrassment at so unexpected a *rencontre*, could only be equalled by the surprize of the lady; she deigned however to speak, though her mode of address was not the most amicable.

“ I am perfectly astonished, young man, at the assurance which induced you to appear in this house.”

“ As Mr. Butler’s home, (returned Mountford with an air of modest dignity) I confess, Madam, I am not conscious of the impropriety you suggest, especially as it was to him, I meant to pay my respects.”

Piqued

Piqued at this spirited reply, and particularly at an insinuation which seemed to militate against her prerogative, she resumed, "And give me leave to say, you might have spared yourself that trouble, as your Uncle is too justly incensed at your conduct towards your good friend Mr. H——, ever more to countenance a person, who is a *disgrace* to his family. Indeed, I am surprized at your being released from that confinement which we both thought you so well deserved."

Poor Frederic had flattered himself, that this ignominious circumstance had been a secret to his relations, nor could he forbear feeling much disconcerted at the contrary conviction. However, recollecting himself, he replied, "my poverty, Madam, not my principles, may indeed constitute that disgrace." Then, without

solliciting any farther ecclaircissement, he bowed slightly, and retired.

This interview not having any tendency to put him in a better humour with his fortune, than he was in, previous to this visit, he betook himself to the Park, not indeed with a view to amusement, but solely to indulge melancholy, in a sequestered part of it. Here he threw himself on one of the benches, regardless of any thing but his own wretchedness ; he had indulged in that melancholy posture some minutes, when a person, who had been attentively surveying him, cried, " It is he ! It is Mountford !" Roused by the exclamation, he turned his head to discover whence it proceeded, and instantly recognized Lord Davenport.

C H A P. XXIV.

THE introduction of his Lordship in this place, is we confess, a little outrée, having made no previous mention of that Nobleman's return to England, but if the reader was as anxious to get Mr. Mountford released from his confinement as ourselves, we conceive the omission will be readily pardoned.

The air and springs of Montpelier having been attended with so salutary an effect, as the restoring the health of the Earl

of

of S — the good Peer accompanied his son and daughter on a tour through Italy; they spent a considerable time at Rome, with as much pleasure as persons of their refined taste might be expected to do, in a city so eminently capable of gratifying both the Antiquarian and the man of fashion; here they saw the polite arts in their native dignity, and here also they contemplated the superb remains of ancient grandeur. At Florence Lady Davenport was happily the mother of a fine boy, to the inexpressible felicity of her affectionate Lord, and the ineffable satisfaction of the Earl. Although this desirable incident could add nothing to the entire harmony which subsisted between that amiable pair, yet his Lordship considered it as the consummation of his felicity, as Lady Davenport certainly felt the conjugal knot more tenderly interesting, by her assumption

assumption of the maternal character. Often would he fold in one delightful embrace his infant son and its lovely mother, and while alternately imprinting an extatic kiss on each feel a thousand nameless transports which must be ever unknown to the lawless libertine, or the mistaken coffer of the hymeneal union; but in the midst of this extatic scene of domestic bliss, he had the affliction to see his beloved Benedicta seized with a fever, the consequence, as Dr. Hartwell declared, of her too strict application to the duties of the nursery. The affectionate anxiety which his Lordship discovered on this occasion, left the most grateful impressions on the heart of her Ladyship, who, when the violence of the malady had abated, was oppressed with a langour which made it necessary for them to repair to Montpelier a second time; for this reason their

return to their native country was delayed much beyond the time they had allotted for their absence, so that it was something more than four years before they arrived in England as they not only visited Paris, but most of the remarkable cities in France and Switzerland; then embarking at Calais were safely landed on the British shore. Lady Davenport had also presented the noble family with a daughter, who together with her brother were in perfect health.

On their arrival at the castle the greatest demonstrations of joy were expressed by the neighbourhood, where the Earl of S. was truly regarded as the patron of the poor, as indeed, the whole family were ever mentioned with the highest degree of love and veneration, by all within the sphere of their acquaintance; preparations were now made for celebrating the nuptials

nuptials of Lord Davenport (which, as we have before seen, were omitted on account of the Earl's indisposition) together with that increase of happiness to the whole family, the birth of two lovely children. on this occasion all possible magnificence was displayed, and the castle for sometime crowded with company ; as the character of Lord Davenport was eminently esteemed, there was not a visitor which did not sincerely participate in the felicity he enjoyed with so amiable a lady, whose affability, beauty, and accomplishments were the theme of general admiration.

As soon as these public ceremonies were over, the happy family retired to find within themselves the exalted pleasures of domestic love and harmony ; here their satisfactions were always new because their actions were the constant result of good sense

sense and virtue. Their table was elegant, and often frequented by the best company the country afforded, though in this definition neither wealth or rank was so principally considered as the graces and ornaments of the mind, for which reason the social conversations at the castle ever abounded with wit and elegance; in a place where the adventitious advantages of fortune met with so little distinction, the cultivated mind was encouraged to expand and to furnish that fund of entertainment, which secures a conversation from degenerating into dulness or detraction; but while the parlour was thus furnished with the highest reparts of mental qualification, the kitchen exhibited in its fullest lustre, the genius of ancient hospitality; the Earl was immensely rich, and he caused his liberal fortune to afford plenteous entertainment to the whole of his
tenantry,

tenantry, and neighbourhood, unlike the modern œconomy of noble families, who waste their estates in the dissipation of the capital, or other places of resort, while the Mansion-house scarcely yields a solitary fire.

The park, lawns and woods, of this venerable seat, were a pleasing source of amusement to her Ladyship, who discovered so laudable an ambition of appearing an estimable companion in the eye of her worthy Lord, that she even adopted his fondness for rural sports, as far, at least, as was consistent with the delicacy of the female character. She accompanied him in hunting, shooting, &c. ; for though she did not indeed actually manage the fowling piece, she nevertheless often attended him on those excursions, though it was shrewdly remarked, that at such times,

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the character of the keen sportsman was lost in that of the tender gallant. When the weather was unfavourable, they usually retired as soon as breakfast was over, to the library, or the music-room ; sometimes, indeed, to the nursery ; a scene which afforded them not the least exquisite of their pleasures. Here Lord Davenport was wont to contemplate his beloved Benedicta, in the highest point of female excellence ; here he saw superior beauty and singular accomplishments, receiving the fullest illustration in the amiable discharge of maternal duties. The good Earl, who really esteemed her as the greatest blessing which could have been bestowed on his family, was daily discerning some new trait of mind or temper, to improve that exalted degree of paternal affection, with which he regarded her ; but that which gave him particular pleasure,

pleasure, as it resembled certain qualities distinguishable in the characters of ladies of quality in the last century; was the discovery of an apartment which her Ladyship had appropriated solely to the service of the necessitous: it was stored both with medicines for the sick, and apparel for the healthy, whose industry was, by the proper dispensation of these assistances, both encouraged and rewarded. This benevolent plan had been a good while established, without the privity either of her husband or the Earl, when one day the latter accosted her with an affected gravity, “I little thought, said he, I should have occasion to reproach my dear daughter of selfishness; but indeed, indeed, you are a very niggard.”

“ How, (replied she changing colour) in what my Lord have I merited this charge.”

“ Nay

“ Nay no equivocation, facts are strong against you, come with me and I will instantly convict you.”

Her Ladyship really alarmed, could with difficulty suppress a starting tear; Lord Davenport was ready to exculpate his wife, whatever might be the nature of the charge, when a wink of good humour from the Earl, convincing him of the pleasantry of the affair, he accompanied them in silence till they reached the door of the apartment before-mentioned, when the Earl, pointing to the shelves loaded with medicine and apparel, said,

“ See there! am I wrong in my charge! I convict you Lady Davenport, of having contrived a fund of the most exalted pleasures; of secreting those pleasures from the knowledge of me, your father, and of

Lord

Lord Davenport your rightful Lord; and of greedily feasting on them without so much as allowing either of us a share in the luxurious banquet."

" And is this all, (cried she smiling) Heavens my Lord, you have half terrified me to death."

" No (returned the Earl tenderly embracing her) it is not all, for you shall permit me, my dear Benedicta, to deposit this to the fund, (laying down a bank note of an hundred pounds) and I insist that every year you receive from me the like contribution."

Her Ladyship would have declined this liberality, declaring that her pin money was more than sufficient for every purpose she could have in view.

" See

" See now, (said the Earl facetiously) how this selfish girl would arrogate all to herself: I told you, my Lord, that she was a very niggard."

Benedicta then took the note with a grateful curtesy, observing that she was happy in finding her little plan had met with the approbation of his Lordship.

During the space of twelve months which had passed in this delightful manner since the family had returned to England, Lord Davenport had never visited the capital, and probable never intended it, being so well satisfied with the portion of happiness he enjoyed in a retired life, as to conclude he needed not to roam abroad in quest of greater; but there happening a dissolution of parliament, several of the most respectable gentlemen in the county

united

united in desiring his Lordship to represent them in the new parliament; this he at first declined; till the Earl observed that it could not be refused with propriety.

“ As a member of the common society (continued that nobleman) your country has claims on you, my Lord, which you ought not to reject; a virtuous citizen will contribute what he can to the good of the community: you are called on to represent a numerous body of people; now though that honour when acquired by venal methods is so far from being estimable in my eyes, that I should much rather see you consume life in obscurity; yet when called on to that office by your fellow citizens, you cannot refuse them without violating your social obligations, and

discovering
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discovering at the same time a culpable preference of private ease."

This suggestion had the desired effect; Lord Davenport though opposed by a mercenary creature of a certain great man, was returned by a great majority of votes, and consequently obliged to quit the peaceful retirement of the castle for a more public and less tranquil scene. On this occasion, however fondly attached to her little nursery, Lady Davenport thought it her duty to accompany her Lord to town, though in their way they determined to stop at the village where the good Curtis resided, whose daughter had been long expected at the Castle, but had been prevented by an ill state of health from making that visit. Miss Curtis received her Ladyship with the warmest affection, as did also the worthy Divine. As during

the

the two days which they spent in that peaceful habitation, mention was frequently made of the Butler family, (who were then in London) Lady Davenport took an opportunity to gratify a benevolent curiosity, by asking what was become of young Mountford; the Doctor replied, that the last accounts we had received of him were from France, where he found he was in company with a very worthy young gentleman, from whose father he had some valuable expectations: such was the information which Frederic had given his friend in a letter, since which, the Doctor observed, he had received no tidings from him, and expressed both concern and surprize. The truth was, as Mountford had passed most of his time since he returned to England, in a situation which he had no mind to discover, he had omitted giving the good Doctor any

intelligence of his return; and though he well knew his benevolence would have been cheerfully exerted in extricating him from that place of ignominy, yet he scorned to insinuate a hint of that kind, and rather chose to appear disrespectful by his silence, than to excite a compassion which must have been of disadvantage to the circumstances of that worthy man. Lord Davenport, who both from his own acquaintance with Mr. Mountford, and the character his Lady had given of him, had a great respect for that gentleman, said that it was probable letters had been lost, for he could not believe him to be regardless of so amiable a benefactor.

As soon as the arrival of Lord and Lady Davenport in town, was announced to the public, they received the compliments of Mr. and Mrs. Butler—as they had not seen

seen her ladyship since her marriage, the former was particularly delighted at that appearance of health and contentment, which was visible in her countenance, and he even wept tears of paternal joy. Mrs. Butler also expressed her satisfaction, not that she entered at all into the feelings of her husband on the occasion, it was sufficient for her that she saw Lady Davenport appearing with all that splendor of rank and equipage, which in her opinion constituted true happiness, as for any other considerations she thought little of them. After the first compliments were over, she began to expatiate on the sovereign delights of the town, opposed to the horrid dulness of the country, and expressed her surprize that her ladyship had not visited it the last winter. The latter replied, that she should not have been in London then, if the public character of her Lord had

not rendered that measure necessary.

" Well, cried Mrs. Butler, you are prepared I hope my Lady to do honour to that character, by discovering a public spirit yourself—I mean by taking the lead in fashionable amusements, as becomes a person of your Ladyship's rank, rather than moping at home, as you once were so shockingly addicted to, though I dare say travelling has worn off that rustic propensity."

Lady Davenport could not help smiling at this speech, particularly at Mrs. Butler's idea of doing honour to his Lordship's public character, and this smile being taken as a tacit approbation of her advice, that Lady took her leave perfectly satisfied with the visit.

The family had not been long in
London,

London, before her Ladyship paid a visit to her much esteemed Mrs. Barclay, who received her with maternal affection, and begged to have as much of her company during the session, as could be spared from her more amusing engagements. With this polite invitation Benedicta readily complied, and certainly considered the time, she frequently spent with that excellent woman, as more agreeably employed than it could have been in the gayest circle.

Happening to be one day at dinner at Mr. Butler's, together with her Lord, mention was made of young Mountford, on which Lord Davenport expressed a desire to know what was become of him, Mrs. Butler was ready enough to reply, that she expected shortly to see his name in the Old Bailey Calendar; he was lately, she

added, released from the Fleet, (though by what means she could not devise) where he had been confined for a debt contracted at a Bagnio; and then produced a letter from her pocket book, received from Mr. H—, wherein he gave an account equally false and shocking of the conduct of Mountford, after saying every thing which malice could suggest, to the prejudice of his character, the writer concluded with the circumstance which Mrs. Butler had with much pleasure related.

"I think, said Lord Davenport, there appears something incredible in this report, though the best principles may possibly be corrupted, yet the transition from virtue to vice cannot be so rapid as represented in Mr. Mountford's case."

"I doubt (returned Mrs. Butler,) his principles

principles were never very good, my Lord."

" His former conduct gave no room for that suspicion Mrs. Butler."

This lenient remark of Mrs. Butler's, would have met with a sharp rejoinder, if Lord Davenport had not prevented it, by asking that gentleman if he were personally acquainted with Mr. H—.

" No, my Lord, not in the least."

" Did you then, Sir, solicit from him any account of your nephew?"

Mr. Butler replied in the negative.

" Then (resumed his Lordship) it appears to me a piece of premeditated

H 4 malice;

malice; a poor revenge perhaps for some unavoidable or unintentional affront. A friend, Sir, would scarcely have drawn the picture in so black a colouring, though urged to disclose some disagreeable facts; the design is manifestly that of an enemy, of course to be regarded accordingly."

Mrs. Butler seemed by no means disposed to admit so candid a palliation of the case, though her husband discovered something of a more placable disposition, however, the subject was dropped, and the following morning that amiable Nobleman happened to meet with Mountford in the Park, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXV.

THE first pledge of Lord and Lady Davenports conjugal affection, being (as before observed) a son, who by this time had nearly attained his fifth year, several debates had already passed at the Castle, between his Lordship and the Earl on the point of education, the former was for placing his favourite boy, young as indeed he was, at a public school, the Earl strongly opposed that measure, from an opinion he had always entertained in favour of private tuition; “Are not, (he would say) the advantages of a liberal education to be procured by means of a proper tutor at home.”

“ They unquestionably may, but as youth are known to make the most rapid advances in study when animated by a spirit of emulation, our young pupil, my Lord, must necessarily be destitute of that spur by the mode you would adopt.”

“ In truth, son, I do not approve that motive to improvement, I am not sure that it does not degenerate into the basest of passions, envy; but admitting there must be some incentive to study, an ingenuous lad, who has been properly trained to filial love, will find his ambition excited by the laudible view of obtaining his parents approbation, and those little favours which their discretion will prompt them to bestow.”

“ But still, my Lord, there are advantages to be acquired in a public school,
such

such as that assured air and address which are more desirable than the sheepish bashfulness a boy is apt to contract at home; besides an opportunity of discovering the various passions and dispositions of human nature, which are here displayed without disguise."

" You have now touched on the very point on which turns my principal objection. I grant that a public seminary is an epitome of the world, where mankind is seen in miniature ; but do you expect your son should have judgment sufficient to condemn what is culpable in the characters of his school-fellows ; is it not far more likely that he will adopt a general example, rather than seek out the amiable qualities of a few ; particularly as he may be accustomed to hear those qualities, branded with the epithet of cowardice ;

want of spirit, &c. in short as the improvements of the heart are more estimable than those of the head, a tender parent would be content with a tedious progress in a child's attainments, rather than risk the entire corruption of his moral faculties. These considerations weighed so powerfully both with myself and your excellent mother, that we determined on providing proper tutors for your Lordship at home, and I think the world has never condemned that conduct."

Lord Davenport, if not convinced, had had so much respect for his noble father, as to induce him at least to acquiesce in his scheme, especially as he found it had the sanction of his Lady's approbation, he had therefore for some time been looking out for a person whose moral and intellectual qualifications should recommend him as a proper

tutor

tutor for his son, when he accidentally discovered Mountford. Having learned from that unfortunate young man, the particulars of his present situation, as well as an explanation of the story which Mrs. Butler had found pleasure in retailing, it instantly occurred to him, that he had now an opportunity of providing eligibly for a young man of merit, by engaging him as private tutor to master Augustus. After mentioning the scheme, "my boy (continued his Lordship) is yet too young for your instructions, but you shall go down with us to the Castle, Mountford, and wait till he is fit to become your pupil."

The politeness as well as beneficence of this invitation were too interesting to be rejected. Frederic took a slight survey of his heart, and thought it was sufficiently steeled against any improper remembrance

remembrance of Lady Davenport, to enable him to encounter the measure ; he agreed therefore to accompany the family on their return to the country, after which they parted. Lord Davenport knowing that his lady had been accustomed to speak of Mr. Mountford in terms of the highest respect, did not doubt but this step would be peculiarly agreeable to her ; meditating a little surprise, he briefly told her that he had met with a person whom he thought infinitely capable of becoming the instructor of their dear boy. " He is a young man of an excellent genius (said his Lordship) improved by the advantages of literature and travel ; but what I value more than these, is the goodness of his heart, which I think one of the best in the world."

" I do not doubt the success of your
Lordship's

Lordship's penetration ; but, however accomplished this person may be, surely, my dear Lord, Augustus has at present more occasion for a nurse than a tutor."

" True, my love ; and though I made use of this pretext, yet, in fact, it was only an excuse for assisting a most unfortunate young gentleman, who at present is in very ineligible circumstances, and I think would scarcely have accepted my good offices had they not been tendered in some such mode ; he will dine with us to-morrow, and you will then be able to give an opinion of my choice."

Benedicta replied that she did not know which to admire most ; either the benevolence of his Lordship's temper, or the delicacy with which that benevolence was always exerted ; he was about to call her a little

a little flatterer, when the arrival of company put an end to the conversation."

The next day, agreeable to appointment, Frederic arrived in St. James's-square. As he had had sufficient time for collecting as much assurance as was necessary for the occasion, his behaviour when ushered into the presence of Lady Davenport had nothing in it of awkward embarrassment, he approached her with an air of modest respect, and we verily believe with as much philosophy as if he had never known her any other than the wife of Lord Davenport. The case was somewhat different on the part of her Ladyship, who little suspecting that the person his Lordship had selected was her quondam friend, felt he self quite disconcerted at so unexpected an interview, while her Lord enjoyed the effect of a surprize, which was
the

the consequence of his plan. In a few minutes however she was able to desire him to be seated, with all the tranquility of good breeding, though there was something of pensiveness in her air during the whole time of dinner, and as soon as the wine came on the table she retired to her dressing room, where she deliberated with great seriousness on the present posture of affairs: that Mountford should become one of the family, and that not for a transient visit, but probable for some years, was a circumstance extremely alarming to her delicacy; she was at a loss also to account for his conduct in accepting such an engagement; she knew the rectitude of his principles, and therefore could not suppose he had been influenced by any unworthy motive; it was probable nothing but the most unfortunate circumstances would have induced him to acquiesce in such

such a measure, which certainly had much of temerity in it. The nature of those sentiments she retained for Lord Davenport left her nothing to dread on her own part, neither could she apprehend any thing u handsome on that of Frederic ; but still there was something in the affair indelicate and improper, and she thought it incumbent on her to oppose the measure ; but then on the other hand, such an opposition, as she could not frankly state her objections, would subject his Lordship to much conjecture, and also deprive an unfortunate and worthy young man of an eligible mode of subsistence ; upon the whole then, as the inconveniences she feared might be chimerical, she thought it most prudent to appear entirely acquiescent with her Lord's intentions, trusting to the purity of her own heart for the continuance of that tranquility

about

she

she had hitherto enjoyed in the conjugal state."

As soon therefore as the Parliament broke up, Mountford accompanied Lord and Lady Davenport to their country seat, where they were received with raptures by the good Earl, and a thousand artless caresses by their two children, the worthy old Peer having been apprized of Mountford's arrival, received him in the most polite and friendly manner, nor was it long before his modesty, good sense, and sweetness of manners, entirely won him that Nobleman's esteem, who ever afterwards expressed peculiar satisfaction in his society — this circumstance, together with the friendship of Lord Davenport, and the obliging demeanour of his Lady, could not but render his situation at the Castle as agreeable as he could possibly desire, especially

especially as his honest soul was so much a stranger to every selfish or envious sensation, as cordially to rejoice in the felicity which that amiable pair apparently enjoyed with each other. The tender age, or rather infancy of his pupil, convinced him that Lord Davenport, in appointing him to the office of tutor to his son, was moved more by a benevolent design of alleviating the distresses of his situation, than by any view of immediate usefulness in that appointment, which for some could be nothing more than nominal, and this consideration inspired him with the liveliest gratitude towards that generous benefactor, so that in fact had no the fervor of his former passion for Lady Davenport been long since suppressed by the efforts of reason and honour, he would have blushed to have been conscious of any sentiment inimical to the obligations he conceived
eminently

eminently due to his Lordship. Such being the present disposition of his mind, he found his residence in the family truly agreeable, and he partook in all their various amusements with a fraternal spirit; honoured by the constant friendship and esteem of his noble patrons, he could only find his own happiness in theirs.

C H A P. XXVI.

THREE are trials which virtue itself would do well to avoid;" it is a sentiment to which we most heartily subscribe, though it was long since expressed by another pen, the passions are

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the most restless disturbers of human happiness, and the wise in all ages have been convinced, that there are no foes so dangerous to man as those within his own breast.

Frederic, on his first arrival at the castle, had written a letter to his old friend Dr. Curtis, in which, after giving a faithful account of past occurrences, he warmly expatiated on his present good fortune, in having found an asylum from his misfortunes in the patronage of Lord Davenport; that worthy gentleman in reply tenderly reprehended him for not having made him acquainted with his former distresses; congratulated him on the happy change of his affairs, and then went on in the following manner:

“I take it for granted, my good Mountford, that you thoroughly sifted your heart

before you ventured to accept a situation, which I think a young man in your circumstances should hardly have dared to trust himself in; however, I do not mean to reprove you, your affairs were desperate, and I am certain you relied much on the rectitude and strength of your own mind; but, my friend, many an honest man has done so before you, and in the event been convinced that nothing in nature is so deceitful as the human heart. I say not this to discourage but rather to put you on your guard against that formidable traytor; there are certain symptoms by which you may discover when a rebellion is forming against the supreme power of reason and virtue; for instance, should you ever feel a sort of pain in reflecting on the happiness your worthy benefactor enjoys in the marriage state; or should you be disposed to regret that

fortune

fortune had not provided it for yourself, rather than him; whenever you shall be conscious of any emotions of this kind, depend on it all is not right within; in this case you have nothing to do but to fly; should you stay to parley with the foe you are lost." Frederic perused these friendly injunctions with attention, but as he saw no immediate cause to apprehend the danger which his venerable friend had intimated, he carefully locked the letter in his escritoir, and we believe thought nothing of the advice it contained, till the following incident convinced him of its propriety.

He had now been several months at the Castle, and though the young Augustus was not yet capable of being initiated into the sacred walks of learning, he was nevertheless qualified for being a

most pleasing companion to his tutor, who delighted in his innocent prattle, and endeavoured by all means to ingratiate himself in the affections of that lovely boy; in this he succeeded so well, that the child was never so happy as in his company. One day as he was amusing himself with the terrestrial globe in Mountford's apartments, Lady Davenport's woman came to lead him to his mother; the girl, as she went out of the room, dropped an etweecafe, which Mountford taking up knew, it to be the same which he had formerly presented to Benedicta as a little present from Bath. As he was attentively looking at it, and perhaps recalling that time when he enjoyed the pleasing sensation of love, without being sensible of the pain it too often brings with it, the young woman came back evidently alarmed, and seeing the case which she was in search of in his

hand, exclaimed; " La, Sir, I have been frightened to death about that foolish thing ; I was afraid I had lost it."

" And if you had, Mrs. Jenny ; the loss I suppose could not have been of very great consequence."

" You are mistaken, Sir; for it is my lady's case, and I only took a bodkin out of it ; and I am sure if it had not been found she would never have forgiven me."

" Is it possible (said Mountford, with some emotion) that her ladyship can value that poor bauble?"

" Value it; I believe she does, and highly too, though I cannot imagine for what, unless it be to keep for somebody's

fake;

sake ; a sweetheart perhaps ; but I cannot tell ; I am glad however that it is not lost."

The young woman taking the case with a curtsey tripped hastily out of the room, leaving poor Frederic in a strange sort of cogitation ; that Lady Davenport should manifest so particular a regard for a thing by no means valuable in itself, seemed to imply something of good will to the donor ; the conclusion whether right or wrong was too enchanting to be coolly relinquished. And in truth he was so far from attempting it, that he indulged with transport on the idea, and certainly felt a pleasure he had never experienced before ; nor is it to be wondered at that such a sensation should find a ready reception in one of the best and purest of human hearts, since in its present state there was nothing inimical to the felicity of Lord Davenport,

nothing derogatory to the honour of his lady; it was simply a self-congratulation on the probability of being regarded with some degree of tenderness by a beloved object; a sentiment so very plausible, and which discovered nothing to alarm the most rigid honour, not only found admission to the breast of Mountford, but was eagerly entertained there as a source of the most refined satisfaction; the feeling he was persuaded was purely platonic, and as such might be indulged without the remotest degree of criminality.

Hitherto Mountford had been accustomed to look on wealth with a truly philosophic eye; often when at the peace dwelling of Dr. Curtis, he would exclaim in the complacency of his soul: "What are those gifts of fortune which mankind are so anxious to obtain; do they bestow

happiness, or can they preserve it if acquired; no, I am convinced they are of no account in the catalogue of real blessings, since we see them indiscriminately showered on the most worthless of our species." But his opinion in this respect seemed now to have undergone some change; he would often reflect with chagrin on the cruel partiality of fortune which by depriving himself of those advantages so profusely lavished on others, had prevented him the enjoyment of the only felicity on earth; for he had now brought himself to be persuaded, that had his fortune been equal to Lord Davenport's, the lovely Benedicta had been his own; if therefore he did not absolutely wish his lordship's happiness less than it was, he could scarcely forbear to consider him as a fortunate usurper of that felicity, which, but for the difference of

I 3 circumstances,

circumstances, would have been his right; this train of thinking at last produced a kind of dejection in his air, which was obvious to the whole family, but nobody observed it with more concern than did Lady Davenport herself, who by this time was so well satisfied with the propriety of Mountford's conduct, that she really rejoiced in the friendship which both the Earl and her Lord daily testified towards him, and consequently in those advantages of situation which resulted to him thereby.

One fine summer evening as they had been drinking tea in an alcove in the garden, Lord Davenport was suddenly called away on some business, and as the Earl had not that afternoon been of the party, Frederic was left alone with her ladyship. The sun was now sunk behind the hills, and the moon rising in the opposite horizon,

horizon, shed a pleasing lustre on the woods and groves, all nature was serene and tended to inspire serious thoughts, they were silent for some minutes, at length Lady Davenport contemplating the scene around, observed that a hanging wood then in their view, very much resembled one at Butler-place, where, continued she, "We used so often to walk;" this was inadvertently touching a very tender chord. Frederic, without replying heaved a profound sigh, which her ladyship observing, took that occasion to remark on that dejection which she had of late discovered. "My good Mountford (said she) what is the reason of that melancholy air of your's which gives so sensible a concern both to my Lord and me, acquaint me with the cause of your distress, and depend on receiving from me the tender sympathy of a sister."

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Her Ladyship's hand lay carelessly on the table, Frederic at that moment regardless of every thing but the ardour of his feelings, instantly seized it, kissed it, and pressed it to his heart; "it is here, (cried he,) with plaintive emotion; it is here the malady is seated, and death only can be my cure." The passionate exclamation was too well understood, a tear stole into her Ladyship's eye, and in the pity which her bosom felt, she forgot to draw back the hand which he still held. Did virtue here make a pause? No surely; nothing like it, but at that moment a tender recollection of the past inspired her Ladyship with the most compassionate feelings. Lord Davenport appearing, she hastily ran, and locking her arm in his, retired to the house. Soon after she withdrew to her closet, where reflecting on the incident of the evening, she felt with horror
her

her prudence alarmed, and the purity of her soul was shocked; upon the whole, she was convinced that Mountford must no longer be entertained as one of the family, how yet to act in so delicate a conjuncture she could not tell, his removal from the Castle was absolutely necessary, but how to effect it without injuring him, or confessing her reasons to his Lordship, was a point which very much perplexed her; at last she determined on applying to Mountford himself, in the rectitude of whose principles, notwithstanding the weakness of a recent moment, she had great confidence, and for this purpose indited the following laconic billet.

MOUNTFORD,

You cannot but be convinced that your residence at the Castle is now become highly improper, you will do

well

well to quit it, and may happiness attend you.

This note she carefully locked up in her bureau, intending to get it conveyed to him the next morning, for she was peremptorily resolved to be no more alone with a person whose very sighs had a fatal tendency; but she needed not to have perplexed herself on this point, for Mountford was no sooner alone, than he blushed at the conduct which he had involuntarily betrayed, he was as one awakened from a delusive dream, the train of meditations which of late had occupied his mind appeared to him in a high degree of criminality, he was convinced that the advice contained in Dr. Curtis's letter ought much sooner to have been attended to; however, it was not yet too late to fly, and that he was firmly resolved on doing, although

the

the consequences might be productive of indigence, and every species of pecuniary distress.

The next morning, just as Lady Davenport was preparing to leave her dressing room, his Lordship came in, and with an air of surprise, " my dear Benedicta, (said he,) I have disagreeable news to tell you, Mountford is about to leave us.

" How my Lord?"

" He has just told me his intention, at which I am both grieved and surprized, for the friendship I have for him, makes me sincerely anxious for his welfare; we must prevent this capricious, and certainly imprudent measure my love."

" By

" By no means, let him pursue his intention, especially as perhaps your Lordship may be able to assist him in his future plan; pray what does he intend to do?"

" He talks of going to the East Indies, now I believe I have interest with some of the Directors of that Company, and as you observe, may probably procure him some advantages. If he determines to go, I will endeavour to establish him in an eligible department."

Pursuant to this friendly scheme, his Lordship immediately dispatched letters to town on the business, which succeeded so happily, that he had a rational expectation of a comfortable establishment for his friend; it only remained that he should be accommodated with a sum of money sufficient for the exigencies of such an undertaking,

undertaking, but here the benevolent nobleman found an obstinate impediment to his generous design. Frederic peremptorily refused to accept a single shilling: “No, my Lord, (said he,) the obligations already conferred are greater than I have merited.” As he spoke this a flood of tears gushed from his eyes, which his Lordship interpreted as the marks of regret at quitting the family, but in fact they were the effusions of an ingenuous heart, severely upbraiding itself for having dared to indulge a feeling, derogatory to the friendship and gratitude he owed that most generous benefactor.

On the morning fixed for his departure, Lady Davenport thought it best rather to feign a slight indisposition, as a pretext for remaining in her chamber, than expose herself to the disagreeable circumstances
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of a parting interview; nor did Mountford in reality desire one, having taken leave of the Earl on the preceding evening, he embraced his Lordship, who, mingled tears with his, then uttering a fervent prayer for his felicity, tore himself, from the Castle in an agitation of mind scarcely to be conceived, but it was the triumph of virtue, and “a thousand liveried angels wait thee,” Mountford, to soothe the throbings of thy honest heart.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXVI.

BEING now about to quit England for ever, he thought it incumbent on him in point of duty and respect, to pay one more visit to his uncle, who he understood was then at Butler-place; he therefore pursued his way thither, but on his arrival found the family in hourly expectation of Mrs. Butler's decease, who was given over by the physicians; not that these apprehensions had any thing in them very insupportable, as her pride and petulance had rather retarded than conciliated the affections of her servants.

Mr.

Mr. Butler, indeed, manifested that decent concern, which was rather the effect of a benign temper, than any passionate regard he had for his lady, whose intolerable humour had rendered to him the yoke of Hymen somewhat unpleasant. He received his nephew with a good deal of cordiality, and on being acquainted with his intention replied, “ the scheme requires more deliberation than I have leisure at present to bestow. You must not leave me, till the event of Mrs. Butler’s illness shall be known, after which we will think farther on this affair.”

In compliance with this request, Mountford readily postponed his journey to the capital, and on the fourth day after his arrival at Butler-Place, he saw his uncle released from his matrimonial tie by the death of his wife, who after a life of vanity and

and folly, unmarked by a single trait of beneficence, or an hour of true felicity, died really regretted by none; she was however conveyed to her last abode in the same style of fastidious pomp which had marked her character when living, but though her husband caused a most superb monument to be erected to her memory, yet was the humble mound of social virtue, though bounded only by osiers, and watered by the heart-transmitted tear, a far more noble mausoleum.

As soon as the funeral obsequies were performed, Mr. Butler finding himself in full possession of an ample fortune, and at liberty to exert the natural feeling of an amiable temper, began seriously to disapprove of Frederic's scheme, or in other words to consider him as a person whose society would prove entirely agreeable, and

whose

whose merit would one day do honour to the wealth he possessed; in fine, he not only refused his consent to his embarkation for the Indies, but informed him, that he was now resolved to atone for all past neglect, by adopting him as the sole heir of all his real and personal estates; "I ought (said he) to have done justice to your merit long agone; though, perhaps, the reason that I did not, will scarcely be considered as an extenuation of the fault; however, I will make what reparation I can, and I am convinced your accomplishments will justify every regard I can possibly shew you, and indeed do honour to the fortune of which you are henceforth to esteem yourself the undoubted heir."

So advantageous a turn of affairs might have been expected to elevate the mind of a spirited young man, but such in reality

reality was not the case with poor Mountford; the good fortune which now attended him, arrived at a period when those vivid pictures which young minds are apt to draw of life, were shaded by disappointment; it came too late to serve his more tender interest, and as for the world at large, the knowledge he had acquired of it could only create disgust; the present situation of his mind was not adapted to the sober scheme of domestic quiet, and we question whether the itinerant plan he had lately mediated, would not have suited with it much better than a stationary residence even in the bosom of affluence; however he was not so imprudent as to reject the favours of his uncle, and the moderation with which he received them, threw a new lustre on his character. The good Dr. Curtis sincerely rejoiced in so happy a change in the fortune

fortune of his young friend, on expressing his pleasure on that subject, Frederic replied, with an air of dissatisfaction, that gave him much concern, “ Alas ! my dear Sir, the circumstance which seems to delight *you*, affects me but coolly ; I have no use for wealth.”

“ How so,” said the Doctor.

“ Because I am not in a disposition to enjoy it.”

“ Nor was it given for your enjoyment alone, young gentleman : if considered in so selfish a view, I believe, indeed, that it would be incapable of affording you solid happiness. You are only appointed the trustee of a fund committed to your hands, not for your own sole use, but to be distributed to the rightful claimants,

the

the children of distress ; and you may, and ought to find, abundant pleasure in the discharge of such an office.”

“ True, (replied Mountford in the language of Belcour) I am the offspring of misfortune, and therefore, while I have hands, I will stretch them out to the unfortunate.”

He now made it his busines to acquaint his good friends at the Castle, with the late unexpected train of events, an information which would have afforded them the liveliest joy, had the posture of affairs in that noble family left them at liberty to taste that sensation ; but all here was now a melancholy picture of the deepest distress, and the most unaffected sorrow : the fatal occasion of which shall be the subject of another chapter.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXVII.

EVER eager to oblige the wife he adored, Lord Davenport had lately presented his lady with an elegant phæton, built entirely on a new construction. They were one morning taking an airing in it, drawn by a pair of beautiful horses ; the animals were young and spirited ; no danger, however, was apprehended from that circumstance, as his Lordship was

known

known to drive with incomparable skill: most unfortunately, as he was engaged in some tender attentions to his beloved companion, the horses felt a relaxation of the reins, and immediately sat off with an impetuosity which he was no longer able to restrain—the carriage was overturned, and broken in a thousand pieces: would we could say that no more dreadful consequences ensued. Her ladyship, indeed, was taken up unhurt, but it was only to behold a distressing spectacle—the best and tenderest of husbands, apparently in the arms of death: the blow which he had received was mortal, but not instantly so. His Lordship was conveyed speechless to bed; from which state of insensibility he, however, was in a few hours recovered so far, as to be able to take a last, a tender farewell of a wife he adored—of a father whom he loved and honoured. Calling
for

for a pen and paper, he desired to be left alone for a few moments: then again summoning both into his presence, he took the trembling hand of his lady, and presented her with the paper which he had just written and sealed. "This," said he, "my beloved Benedicta, contains my last will; not indeed a disposal of pecuniary affairs, (that I have not till now neglected,) but in it you will see the earnest desire of my soul. The solemnity of those moments, in which that desire is express, will, I am assured, give it all the weight I wish. But, my best love, I deliver you this paper, under a solemn injunction not to open it before the expiration of a year from my decease."

With a countenance bedewed with tears her Ladyship received the awful deposit. She kissed it with ineffable respect; then dropping

dropping on her knees by the bedside, “ I receive it,” said she, “ as the most solemn obligation: whatever be the contents, it is sufficient for me to know it is the desire of the best of husbands, the noblest, tenderest, and most generous of men: and here, my dearest Lord, I promise implicit obedience, as far as it shall be in my power to perform.”

“ Enough,” returned he, “ I die satisfied. But where is my poor afflicted father? Let me see him also, and then—”

The Earl, in an agony of grief, was on the other side of the bed. He drew aside the curtain, but his quivering lips could only utter — “ My son, my dear son!” His Lordship took the cold hand of his aged father and joined it with that of his wife: “ Comfort,” resumed he, “ comfort

each other. My Benedicta, this is your true father; and here, my Lord, is the best and tenderest of daughters. Do not regret my destiny, I have lived long enough, if the value of life be more properly estimated by the happiness rather than the years we enjoy. I have had more than my share of earthly comforts; this dear, this best of women has rendered me most truly blest."

" Oh, my dearest Lord," cried she, pressing his pale hand to her lips, and in a voice half choaked by rising sobs, " I have much to ask forgiveness for; many I fear have been my inadvertances."

" None, none," he resumed; " your virtues, and the amiable sweetness of your temper, have shone unrivalled. I thank you, my best love, with my latest breath,

for all the tenderness with which you have returned my faithful love. Our children — But why should I waste those moments in recommending them to the affection of the best of mothers ? In their rising virtues may you find the just reward of your own goodness ! The sorrows of my poor father I know will be softened by your pious cares ; and he will — ”

Here his Lordship sunk exhausted on his pillow, the hand of death pressed on his closing eye-lids ; he could only extend a dying hand to each of those beloved objects. The Earl, overcome by his emotions, sunk down on the bed of his departing son. In broken accents he cried — “ Why have I lived to see this day ? My son, my dear son, I feel I shall not long survive thee ; this dreadful stroke

will snap the thread of life, which age has already rendered feeble."

Rouzed by the pathetic exclamations, nature again assayed to rally her dissipated powers. His Lordship, once more lifting his head from the pillow, cast an expressive look on his agonizing father—"I trust not so," said he; "live, my father, if possible, for the sake of a wife dear to my soul, and for the sake of the sweet pledges of our conjugal affection. A consolation of the purest kind awaits you; it is now, my Lord, you reap the reward of your paternal cares in the cultivation of my youthful mind. By an early initiation into the knowledge of every moral and religious duty, you have enabled me to live happily—to die gloriously. Yes," continued he, while a sweet gleam of transport animated his pale countenance, "the doors

doors of futurity opens to my view the most extatic prospect. Call not my life short, or my death untimely; think rather I am favoured with an early admission to that state of being, wherein the soul can only taste those exalted pleasures which are suited to her high capacity."

Here he paused again, evidently oppressed by emotions too ardent for the mortal vehicle to support. Nature had exhausted her utmost powers, she could no more; he gently composed himself on his pillow, and soon after closed his eyes for ever: but it was with that seraphic smile, which demonstrated a triumph over death.

Soon after this melancholy event, Lady Davenport, perceiving that the presence of her children never failed to renew the excessive sorrow of the good Earl, resolved to

remove them to a small mansion, about a quarter of a mile from the Castle. It was a building which her late Lord had erected, in the centre of a beautiful wood, and called it the Temple of Solitude. It contained about four rooms on a floor, and was furnished with a good library, a pair of globes, an excellent organ, with several other musical instruments, and, in short, every thing adapted to liberal study or contemplative retirement. A river, well stocked with fish, glided at the distance of a few paces from the house, shaded on either side with romantic bushes, filled with an infinite number of small birds, while the rooks, and other birds, which inhabited the tall and venerable trees, completed a concert inexpressibly pleasing. In this sweetly rural retreat, Lord and Lady Davenport would often take a breakfast, a woman servant residing in the house

house, in order to provide for their reception; and here indeed they passed many hours, in a series of elegant and satisfactory amusements. In removing her little family to this place, her Ladyship sought also the gratification of her most tender feelings. She was a sincere mourner of her late amiable husband; but her grief was of that kind, which loved to feast itself on his memory, and delighted in every scene which tended to recal it. Here then she was at liberty to indulge that penive sorrow, which at the Castle she was obliged to restrain, from her apprehensions of augmenting the distress of Lord S—. She would pass whole hours on the banks of the river, where her dear Lord used to angle, and mingle her sighs with the fanning zephyrs, or her tears with the silver stream. She delighted in playing those pieces on her harpsichord which

he was fond of, and in the library would sit in the chair in which he was generally seated, and read those books which he used to be best pleased with. In these affectionate acts her bosom felt the luxury of tender sorrow, nor would she have resigned these ineffable emotions for all the fastidious enjoyments of what the world calls pleasure. Not that she suffered the indulgence even of such amiable and laudable feelings to interrupt her discharge of social obligations. Her pious attentions to the good Earl were more than ever conspicuous, as her dutious cares were directed to sooth his sorrows, and compose his afflicted mind. She constantly dined with him, besides which, paid him several visits in the course of the day, and at length had the satisfaction of finding the violence of his grief subside into the placid sentiment of Christian resignation.

It was now that Lady Davenport obtained the favour of a visit, which she had often solicited in vain. Mrs. Barclay, who, during the period in which her valued friend had enjoyed, in the society of the best of husbands, every apparent felicity, would never be prevailed on to absent herself from those daily occasions of exerting her benevolence, which her residence near the capital presented ; but no sooner was she informed, that Lady Davenport's situation now required the sympathising aid of friendship, than she hastened to offer her, in person, those arguments, which reason suggested, for composing her mind under a distressing dispensation. The company of this good lady was a sensible pleasure to Benedicta, and of peculiar advantage also to the Earl, who was as much pleased with the cheerfulness and good sense

sense of her conversation, as he before had been charmed with her character.

About this time also Miss Curtis paid a visit to her Ladyship, who having ever retained a sincere regard for that good girl, considered her company as a desirable acquisition. We will, therefore, leave this worthy society, just to take a view of the transactions at Butler-Place, whither the reader, if not by this time sufficiently tired, may accompany us.

C H A P. XXVIII.

THE short period allowed to man on this terrestrial ball, being by no means adequate to the grandeur and extent of his views, he sagaciously seeks to remedy that defect in his charter, by endeavouring to live in his successors, and by perpetuating his title or his name, devises a scheme of concealing, as much as possible, the mortifying circumstance of

his

his own mortality. From some such motive, perhaps it was, that Mr. Butler, in drawing up his will, bequeathed his whole fortune to his nephew, on the express condition of his taking the name of Butler: on the same principle, probably, he was also extremely anxious ~~to see that~~ young gentleman united in the conjugal bond. Having cast his eye on several wealthy families for that purpose, he fixed on a young lady, who was the sole heiress of a most splendid fortune, and great estates. Such a match would abundantly have gratified his warmest views; and, as the lady was by no means disagreeable in her person, he had no doubt of seeing it accomplished. But, on opening his mind to Mountford on the subject, he was surprised at seeing him turn pale as ashes, when he rather expected the proposal would have been received with avidity.

“ You

" You cannot, I think, make any objections, Frederic," said he.

" Not to this alliance, particularly, Sir, as I have not the honour of being acquainted with Miss Curzon."

" You have no aversion to matrimony, I presume?"

" I revere the state: but whatever felicity it may be capable of affording in some instances, I doubt, Sir, it could have none for me?"

" Your affections are possibly engaged?"

Mountford's cheeks flushed a deep scarlet at that suggestion, which Mr. Butler taking as a tacit acknowledgment, thus resumed—" I see this is the case: but come

come, nephew, be candid, and let me know the object of this attachment."

"Have the goodness, my dear Sir, to spare me on a point which could be productive of no satisfaction to you. I hope ever to manifest that gratitude which your bounty to me demands; but do not urge me to enter on a state, in which I must be utterly disqualified either of conferring happiness, or receiving it."

Mr. Butler, somewhat affected by the warmth of this reply, forbore to say anything farther on the subject at that time. He was convinced that his nephew's affections were engaged; and though he could not but be delighted with the scheme he himself had planned, yet he knew, by experience, that the matrimonial union can only be desirable, when the heart

heart takes an ardent part in it; for this reason he resolved to proceed with caution and tenderness. From Mountford's unwillingness to name the object of his regard, he doubted not that it was a person of inferior degree to himself; but should that be the case, as he was bent on seeing his nephew married, he was inclined to compound for the differences of fortune, as in fact, that which he meant to bestow on him was very ample. After some deliberation, it struck him that Frederic had always discovered a particular pleasure in visiting at Doctor Curtis's; and as when once the imagination catches at the most distant glimpse of probability, a thousand trifling circumstances are supervened; as a corroboration, he recollects many instances of a particular attention to Miss Curtis.

The conclusion upon the whole was not very disagreeable, since, if the Doctor could give no portion with his daughter, he certainly had endowed her with an education, which would adorn the most elevated station of life, and he generously determined to accelerate rather than throw any impediment in the way of his nephew's affections. Soon after on an occasion, when he knew Frederic would be from home, he requested the company of Doctor Curtis to dinner; and as soon as the cloth was removed, and wine sat on the table, he drank to the health of Miss Curtis, for whom he said he had a very great respect; but added, "There is a relation of mine, Sir, I believe, who thinks even more highly of her than I do." The Doctor looking rather surprized at this insinuation, Mr. Butler resumed—"Perhaps, my good friend, you have been no

more

more in the secret than myself, and indeed I must acknowledge, the affair has been managed with much discretion by the young folks."

"Upon my honour, I do not in the least comprehend you."

"I mean the *tendresse* which subsists between your daughter and my nephew, which I acquired the knowledge of but a few days since."

"Impossible! surely you must be mistaken."

"Why impossible! Miss Curtis has attractions, and Mountford as much sensibility as most young fellows: there is nothing very surprizing in the matter. I confess, however, the affair has thwarted some

some particular views of my own, nevertheless, I am heartily desirous of establishing my nephew's happiness above any other consideration ; and, therefore Doctor, if you have no objection, we will get our families allied as soon as possible."

" Let me ask you, Sir, did you receive this information from Mr. Mountford himself ?"

" Not directly, it is true ; but he acknowledged, (tacitly at least) that his affections are engaged, and my own sagacity helped me to unravel the rest."

" You have then totally mistaken the matter ; Mr. Mountford's affections are, I believe, engaged, but not to my daughter."

The

The Doctor then discovered to Mr. Butler, the whole affair of that young gentleman's former passion for Miss Clarkson, and passed the highest encomiums on his conduct respecting it: in short, said he, I now hope the constancy of that attachment will receive the reward which is due to the delicacy and honour with which he has managed it.

Nothing could be more agreeable to Mr. Butler, than this discovery, for which he politely thanked the Doctor, as he also did most warmly for the generous and friendly concern he had ever manifested towards his nephew, to which he confessed himself indebted, for the satisfactions he enjoyed in the moral and intellectual ornaments of his character. " You have shewn, (continued he, and the tear of contrition started into his eye as he spoke)

a truly

a truly paternal affection for that young man, at a time, when I, from whom alone it was due, was shamefully neglectful of it."

The Doctor, in order to wave that subject, took notice of the advantages and felicity which doubtless would arise to all parties, by the marriage of Mr. Mountford with Lady Davenport, but being well acquainted with the delicacy of her Ladyship's ideas, he advised Mr. Butler to repress his ardour on that point, till a decent time had elapsed since the death of Lord Davenport, with which advice he entirely coincided, and therefore determined to take no notice to Frederic of the particulars he had learned by the above conversation.

Mountford, perceiving his uncle was
not

not inclined to revive the scheme of his marriage with Miss Curzon, considered his silence in that respect, as a proof of tenderness, which claimed every regard, and therefore redoubled his endeavours to give every possible proof of gratitude and affection. Mr. Butler was so sensibly affected by these attentions, that at the same time he was compelled to lament his former neglect of such merit : he deeply regretted also having so long deprived himself of the refined and social pleasures resulting there from.

C H A P. XXIX.

WHILST Mr. Butler was thus enjoying the most sensible satisfaction in the amiable society of Mountford, Lady Davenport attained the tenth month of her widowhood ; conscious of being in the decline of life, and anxious to see his nephew settled in the marriage state, he thought at that period he might, without any gross impropriety, be allowed at least, to intimate his wish, to the Earl :

pursuant to this conclusion, he dispatched a letter to that Nobleman, in which, after apologizing for whatever might appear premature in the measure, he proceeded to express the ardent desire he had at heart, of an union between his nephew and lady Davenport, in which measure he was the more encouraged to expect the acquiescence of his Lordship, from the very favourable regard already shown his nephew in that noble and generous family ; he then made a cursory statement of the fortune which he proposed to present to Mountford, previous to the marriage, as well as of what he would be farther possessed of at his decease ; after representing every necessary particular in the most candid manner, he concluded with soliciting his Lordship's interest with his charming daughter-in-law, on a point in which

both

both himself and nephew were so warmly interested.

The earl considered the nature of this epistle with real satisfaction; his regard for Mr. Mountford was ardent and sincere, and as he really wished to see her Ladyship eligibly settled once more in the marriage state, he accepted Mr. Butler's proposals with the greatest cordiality, and therefore on the first convenient opportunity he presented his letter to Lady Davenport, and then, without staying to observe the effect it might produce, politely retired leaving her at liberty to peruse it unobserved. It cannot be denied that her Ladyship on this occasion felt some emotions of a very tender kind; the idea of that object which had inspired her earliest regard, was yet dear to her, and now that every thing tended to

to favour the union, what could impede the indulgence of her delicate affection; it was the fate of this lady in almost every incident of her life, to be actuated by opinions different from those entertained by the generality of mankind. That Mountford had possessed the first and warmest place in her heart, was a reason which in the estimation of most people, ought to have determined her on giving him her hand without farther deliberation; but it was the very circumstance, which according to her mode of reasoning, rendered him the very man whom of all others she ought never to marry. Though she had never failed in the smallest instance of tenderness and conjugal fidelity to her late excellent Lord, she was conscious that her sentiments wanted towards him the vivacity of love, to marry then with the person who had been his rival in that point,

appeared to her as an insult to his memory; a kind of indelicacy which consistent with her refined notions of honour, she could not think of without being shocked at the idea; when, therefore the Earl requested to know her sentiments respecting the overture of Mr. Butler, she peremptorily assured him of her resolution never to marry.

“ I am sorry for it (replied he) as I am persuaded, my dear daughter, that your defenceless state, and that of your dear orphans, whenever by the course of nature I am taken from you, will stand in need of a tender protector and friend; and as that event cannot be far distant, I would fain see you in the arms of a virtuous husband, where only your innocence and virtue can find a peaceful asylum from the vexations or the injuries of an ungenerous world;

Mr.

Mr. Mountford is, I confess, the only man I could recommend to your choice; his own personal worth, and the friendship my dear lamented son entertained for him, point him out in the pleasing view of an amiable and tender partner for yourself, a guide instructor and warm friend of the dear babes."

To this argument Lady Davenport answered, that she hoped long to enjoy the patronage and parental kindness of his Lordship, but should she be unfortunately deprived of it, the fortune she possessed, together with her retired disposition, would probably secure her from the interruptions of the impertinent or base part of mankind; and, that however unequal she might be to the task, yet the tenderness and zeal with which she should ever watch over her beloved offspring, would,

she trusted, secure them from the inconveniences of an orphan condition. Upon the whole, she entreated his Lordship to urge her no farther on that subject, as she could not think of a second marriage, without horror.

The Earl was therefore obliged, though with real concern, to acquaint Mr. Butler with her Ladyship's determination, but added, that though a more tender alliance was not, he feared, to be expected, yet he hoped that the most friendly sentiments would continue mutually to animate the families; and influenced by his personal affection for Mr. Mountford, he desired to see him as soon as affairs would render it convenient.

Poor Frederic, when informed of this transaction, sunk into a despondency, from which

which no efforts of his uncle had power to rouze him; it was in vain that he wished him to make a visit to the castle; he replied "that it was the place above all others which he ought to avoid;" in this design however Mr. Butler was not without some reasons of a very plausible nature; he thought that widows vows against second marriages were seldom of an inflexible nature, and concluded that the presence of Mountford was likely to have more efficacy with her ladyship than the rheroric both of himself and the Earl together; but in this he was mistaken, for in compliance with his uncle's persuasions Frederic at length sat out for the seat of the Earl of S. where to his inexpressible sorrow, he found himself unable to make the smallest alteration in Lady Davenport's former resolution. An incident however occurred here which afforded

him a singular pleasure; this was the presence of Mrs. Barclay, whom he instantly recollects as his benevolent deliverer from the horrors of a prison; nothing could equal his surprise and joy at this accidental meeting that good lady, except it was the ardent gratitude which overflowed his susceptible breast; nor was she less pleased at seeing again a young man, whose disinterested conduct had given her the highest opinion of the goodness of his heart; indeed, if the success of his suit to Lady Davenport, could have been promoted by means of an earnest intercessor, he would not have been without such an one in the person of Mrs. Barclay, she had learned his story from the Earl, from which, together with the judgment she had previously formed of his character, induced her to be extremely assiduous in recommending him to her friend,

friend, as a person with whom there was the greatest probability of enjoying the most perfect connubial felicity. This was a theme on which her ladyship needed none to expatiate, her heart was sufficiently interested in the case, but her ideas of delicacy and honour triumphed over every tender feeling; her resolution had cost her some innate struggles, but being once made she declared it to be unalterable; Mountford after passing some weeks at the castle in a series of fruitless endeavours, prepared at last to take his leave, secretly vowing, since every fond and pleasing hope seemed now entirely cut off, to pass the remainder of his life in celibacy.

“ You shall not immediately leave us Mountford (said the Earl) I entreat you will continue here a few days longer, in order to commemorate with us, the

L 4 anniversary

anniversary of that fatal event which deprived you of a most faithful friend; me of a son, whose loss must fill the few moments of my wasted life with anguish."

It was an argument not to be resisted; the good Earl had enforced it with tears, which he seemed desirous of suppressing, but the presence of Mountford needed not such etiquette, the name of Lord Davenport was precious to his soul, and the pearly drop which trickled down his cheek, a full, though tacit acquiescence with the mournful request.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXX.

THE day set apart by the noble and afflicted family, as peculiarly sacred to the memory of the most amiable of sons, and best of husbands, was now arrived; Lady Davenport so far from considering this period as affording a licence for throwing off the habiliments of sorrow, appeared that day in the new habit of the deepest mourning, the sable tincture of which giving additional delicacy to her fine complexion, caused her

to appear with inexpressible loveliness, at least in the eyes of the enamoured Frederic, who really considered the sensibility with which she distinguished that day, as the pleasing picture of a mind the most delicately attuned to every amiable and social affection. As soon as she arrived at the castle; she went directly to the Earl, whom she found in a pensive attitude in his closet, with the packet, which his deceased son had deposited with him as his last will, laying on a table before him.

“ Break the seal, my Lord (cried she) weeping; the contents of this sacred paper concern me I believe principally, and whatever they may be, I am ready to obey even to the utmost verge of possibility.”

He did so with a trembling hand, then wiping away his flowing tears, read the following words.

“ In those awful moments when the lamp of life hastens to its extinction ; when those eyes must cease to gaze on objects which have always given them pleasure, and those lips forbear to tell a beloved parent how dear he is to my filial heart; to express to the wife of my bosom those ineffable feelings which she ever inspires in my soul, let this paper be the sacred deposit of all that remains with me of earthly solicitude. One ardent wish is now the only object of my care ; I will reveal it here, and in the confidence of its accomplishment shall quit this mortal scene, to enter on felicity even superior to what the silken bands of a most propitious marriage has afforded me on earth.

Preparatory to the disclosure of my last request, I will relate to you, my beloved Benedicta, (for to you I now address myself) an incident which occurred to me some months ago; you may perhaps remember our being, when in town, at the theatre, when Miss Fordyce was of our party and in the same box; happening to be seated next her, she insensibly drew me into a conversation on the nature of the marriage state; you were at that time engaged in discourse, and consequently paid no attention to our topic. I recollect I said something in reply to her sarcastic remarks, highly in honour of the conjugal state.

" And pray (said she) do you define this happiness to consist in loving, or being loved?"

" Both

" Both to be sure," I returned.

" It is then necessary that an ardent passion be returned with equal warmth and sincerity."

I answered only by asking her, whether she would choose to wed without such an equivalent.

" Why really (replied she) since human happiness lies pretty much in conceit, it may be sufficient to believe oneself in possession of that equivalent."

" If (said I) the reality be unfortunately wanting, such a belief, indeed, would be the only compensation possible."

" I protest then (with a sarcastic laugh) I begin to be in better humour with matrimony, and shall not despair of being one day

day as happy in that state as your Lordship."

I took no notice of the inuendoe, being neither a stranger to Miss Fordyce's unamiable disposition, or to those envious sensations with which I ever suspected her to behold my Benedicta's superior perfections; however, the next day I received a letter written by a female hand, containing one which I here inclose,* and also the following lines. "If Lord Davenport reads the inclosed it will help him to form a just estimate of some traits in his Lady's conduct at the period fixed for her marriage." Though this incident was manifestly the effect of a melevolent

* This must have been Mountford's letter to Miss Clarkson of the day previous to her marriage with Lord Davenport, though by what means she was robbed of it, does not appear.

melevolent design, levelled at our mutual happiness, I confess the letter, written, as I well knew, by my valued Mountford, together with the recollection of some occurrences coeval with the date of it, gave an insight into the nature of those mental struggles, which apparently distracted your tender bosom at that time ; but be not in pain, my dearest love ; the discovery was neither detrimental to my own happiness, or the exalted opinion I had entertained of yourself ; on the contrary I admired that elevation of soul, which enabled you to triumph over the soft affections of the heart in your scrupulous regard to the dictates of honour, and if before I loved you as a woman, I now adore you as something more. In my first addresses to you, my beloved Benedicta, your perfect mind was more the object of regard than your charming person ; the best and noblest

noblest affections of it, I knew to be devoted to myself; of what then could I complain? nothing; your tenderness, your virtues and unwearied zeal for my happiness, since the day I called you mine, have rendered me the most blest of mankind; and here let me express my gratitude; yes, most amiable of women, I thank you; unfeignedly thank you for all the testimonies of your affectionate regard; but I would be just as well as grateful; suffer me then as a recompence for the generous sacrifice you have made, to give you in my latest moments to the man who only can truly deserve you; to the amiable Mountford, whom I love as myself, and well I know that his generous heart will always overflow with paternal tenderness towards the offspring of his now departing friend. Consent then to give him your hand; with my dying breath

breath I ask it ; where will my widowed Benedicta find amidst the deceits of an ungenerous world, the friendship, the sincerity of her faithful Davenport ; she will find it in his other-self in the man whom I now point out as the guardian and friend of herself and babes. Neither let a too delicate respect to my memory impede the accomplishment of this my last and dearest wish : one year from the perusal of this paper and no longer, do I give for the performance of a promise I am about to extort from you, confident that your esteem for me, will secure your implicit acquiescence, with whatever is uttered as the last desire of your expiring husband, and your rigid veracity will afterwards ensure the actual performance ; I die then as I have lived, the happiest of men. But the hand of Death presses heavily on my closing eye-lids. I can no more, my

Benedicta,

Benedicta, my souls better half. Oh,
adieu, till we meet in the Mansions of
Eternity, there will I renew my pure
attachment; but the thought is too trans-
porting for my present state, till then,
farewell,

Your faithful

DAVENPORT.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXI.

THE preceding chapter closed somewhat abruptly; we attempted not to describe the emotions of Lady Davenport on the occasion therein related, because we think them indescribable, what remains of this history shall be comprised in a few lines, as we suspect the reader already anticipates nearly as much as we have to add, and when this happens to be the case, an author acts very judiciously in laying down his pen as speedily as possible.

The

The Earl sending for Mountford into his closet as soon as her Ladyship had withdrawn, acquainted him with the generous sentiments of his late noble friend, as also of the promise exacted by him in his last moments from his Lady, after which it may be unnecessary to add, that Frederic's stay at the Castle was protracted somewhat beyond the time he had before that incident fixed for his departure, however, he was unable to obtain any farther indulgence from the object of his affections, than permission to renew his visits at the expiration of the year allowed by her deceased Lord, before which period she determined not to listen to the subject of his addresses. "I do not intend (said she to her friends) to indulge an affection to which I was ever a stranger, by attempting to conceal my very favourable idea of Mr. Mountford. I have long been

been sensible of his worth, though conscious that the sentiment however tender, has never, no not for a moment, broke in on the purity, the sincerity of my affection for the best of husbands, whose wish so generously expressed, I am ready to comply with, yet no consideration whatever shall prevail with me to violate in the slightest degree, that decorum which is due from the widow of Lord Davenport."

Pursuant to so respectful a resolution, her ladyship passed the second year of her widowed as she had done the former, in retirement, and the alternate discharge of every filial attention to the Earl; at length, to the entire satisfaction of that venerable nobleman, she gave her hand to Mountford; the good Dr. Curtis performed the sacred ceremony, soon after which, he was presented by the Earl to a very valuable benefice

benefice in the neighbourhood of the castle, by which means her Ladyship enjoyed much of the company of Miss Curtis, for whom she ever retained a very sincere regard. Mr. Butler, who still entertained for his former ward the liveliest sentiments of esteem and affection, was extremely desirous of her making his seat her place of residence, but she would on no account be persuaded to leave the Earl, whose declining age, the relation which he bore to her (she said) demanded all the attention she could possibly give. This singular instance of attachment could not but be particularly grateful to the aged peer, who would have considered a separation from his beloved daughter-in-law as the most painful circumstance that could now have befallen him; the delight which he took in the society of his ~~old~~ ^{very} young ~~and~~ infant ^{and} beloved

infant grand-children, as well as in that of Mountford himself, for whom it has been observed he had a very singular regard, contributed to diffuse a gleam of sun-shine over his departing hours; in fine he lived to see the virtues and amiable qualities of his own son, shining with the brightest lustre in the person of Mr. Mountford, who in the possession of his beloved Benedicta enjoyed the full reward of a passion the most faithful and disinterested; they were blest with several children, yet that circumstance no ways abated the fondness he ever shewed towards the offspring of his noble friend, nor indeed could he easily discriminate between the affection he bore to them, and that which he felt to his own children.

And while every scene at the castle
proved

proved the existence of domestic bliss and harmony, the example of the virtuous pair had the happiest effects on all around them, and tended to inspire the conviction.

That human happiness is the result of reason,
rather than of the passions.

F I N I S.

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